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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that middle school students need a great amount of physical activity to remain alert, motivated and eager to learn. A study was conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Middle-Level Athletics Task Force to gather and evaluate information about athletic programs that are compatible with young adolescents' needs and characteristics and to create developmentally appropriate middle-level athletic programs. This guide, arising from the results of that study, provides resources for school districts and community-based athletic programs seeking to develop, evaluate, and/or revise athletic programs for young adolescents. The first section, "Characteristics of the Young Adolescent and Implications for Athletic Programs," presents selected characteristics of young adolescents and relates them to recommended athletic practices. Section 2, "Philosophy and Recommendations," presents the task force's philosophy and program goals. The final section, "Questions and Answers about Middle-Level Athletics," summarizes often-asked questions regarding athletic programs for the young adolescent. Appendices provide a wide variety of materials to support or clarify the need for developmentally appropriate athletic programs for young adolescents. (LL)

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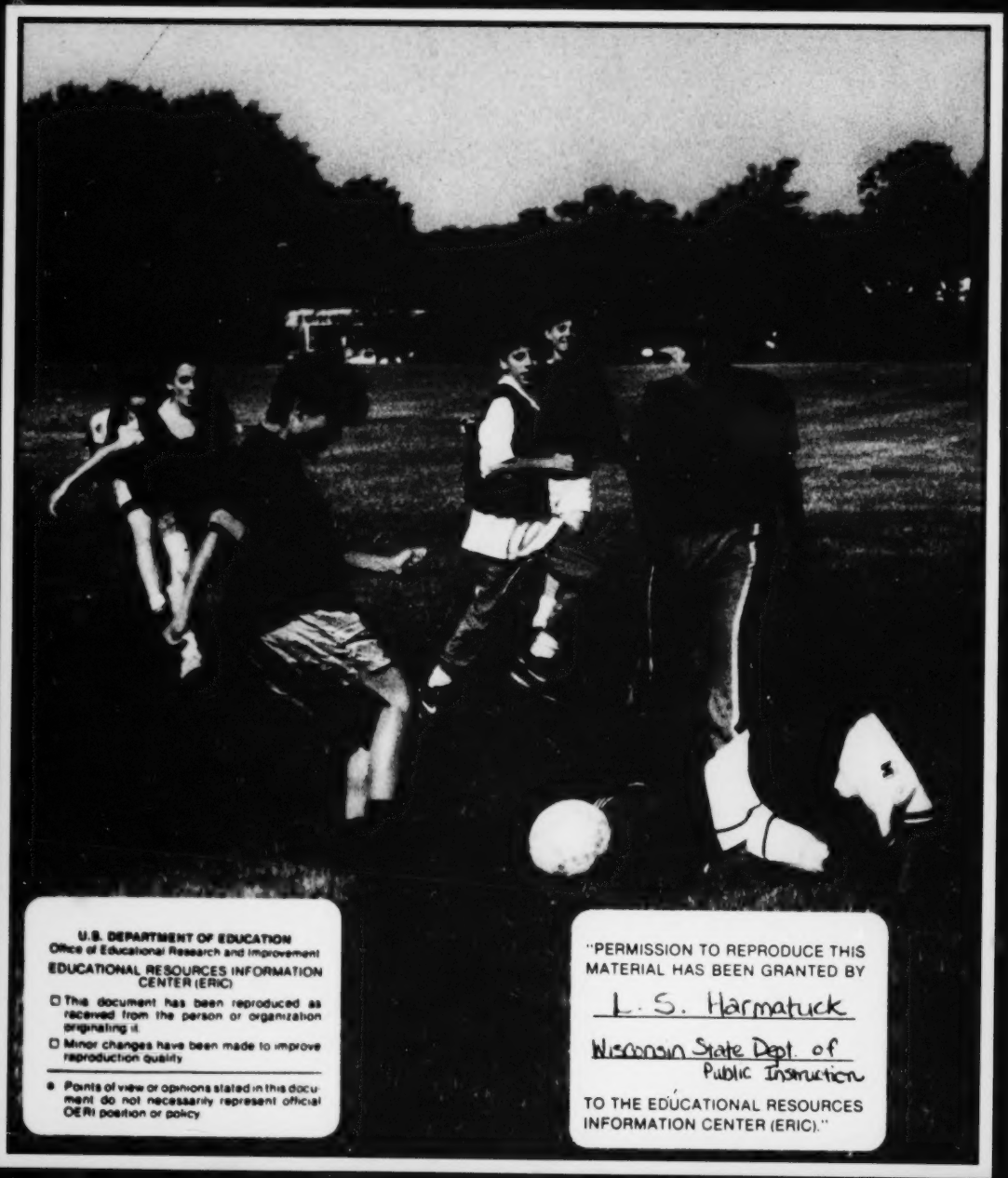

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Middle-Level Athletic Programs

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Foreword

The middle-school movement has had extraordinary positive effects on the quality of education Wisconsin's young adolescents receive. Recognizing these children's special cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs has led forward-thinking teachers to construct dynamic, creative, and exciting middle-level curricula.

Recent research on young adolescents has taught us that children in this developmental stage need a great amount of physical activity to remain alert, motivated, and eager to learn. We also have come to realize that they learn best in situations where cooperation—not competition—is the keynote. What, then, could be more exciting than the resources in this guide to help create developmentally appropriate middle-level athletic programs for young adolescents? Perhaps only the experiences that these youths will have as they participate in sports not for the sake of winning, but for the sake of playing, sharing, enjoying, and becoming fit and healthy.

I commend the Middle-Level Athletics Task Force for its work on this publication and am pleased to offer this information to Wisconsin's physical education teachers, coaches, athletic directors, and, of course, our middle-school children.

Herbert J. Grover
State Superintendent

Acknowledgments

Middle-Level Athletic Programs is an outcome of the work of the Middle-Level Athletics Task Force appointed by State Superintendent Herbert J. Grover. The task force formulated guidelines and recommendations for athletic programs consistent with the developmental needs and characteristics of students in the middle-level grades. Appreciation is extended to the task forces members for their hard work and insights, which made this publication possible. The task force members are listed below with the school district and/or educational group they represent.

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Introduction

Athletic programs provide opportunities for young adolescents to develop and improve their physical abilities through organized team activities. Yet this doesn't mean that all athletic programs are developmentally appropriate for students in this age group. The following questions raise important issues about middle-level athletics:

- Why do so many of these programs fail to promote physical fitness and a healthy life style?
- Why do increasing numbers of young adolescents "drop out" of organized athletic programs as they get older?
- What happens when young adolescents hear conflicting directions from coaches who don't model the very behaviors they expect from program participants?
- What is the result on youth when coaches' and parents' behaviors communicate that winning is everything?
- What happens when athletic seasons extend or overlap with other sports programs, non-athletic school programs, or family activities?
- What *is* the purpose of athletic programs for young adolescents?

To address these and similar questions, Herbert J. Grover, Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction appointed the statewide Middle-Level Athletics Task Force. This group gathered and evaluated information about athletic programs that are compatible with young adolescents' needs and characteristics. The recommendations in this publication arise from results of that study.

How to Use this Publication

This publication provides resources for school districts and community-based athletic programs seeking to develop, evaluate, and/or revise athletic programs for young adolescents. Each section can be used separately or in connection with other sections.

The first section, Characteristics of the Young Adolescent and Implications for Athletic Programs, presents selected characteristics of the young adolescents and relates them to recommended athletic practices. These characteristics and program implications provide the foundation for appropriate programs. Community or school district athletic activities can be compared to the implications to determine the extent to which the activities promote positive development in young adolescents.

The following section, Philosophy and Recommendations, presents the task force's philosophy and program goals that are intended to serve as discussion points in reviewing or evaluating present programs. Each program goal is followed by the research rationale that supports each goal.

The third section, Questions and Answers about Middle-Level Athletics, summarizes often-asked questions regarding athletic programs for the young adolescent. The replies can provide a resource for program administrators and coaches in responding to local concerns.

The appendixes offer a wide variety of materials to support or clarify the need for developmentally appropriate athletic programs for young adolescents. These range from a one-page bill of rights for parents to an extensive report on U.S. youths and sports programs.

Summary

Inadequate or harmful practices, competition for scarce resources and the need for trained coaches all require attention. But the effort will be worthwhile because appopriate athletic programs offer an important opportunity to enhance the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of young adolescents and foster security, support, and success for participants at this age level.

Moreover, coordination and cooperation among individuals and groups responsible for athletic programs can become a powerful force in promoting a positive, healthy, and developmentally appropriate lifestyle for young adolescents.

Characteristics of the Young Adolescent and Implications for Athletic Programs

Young adolescents are faced with wide-ranging physical, emotional, social, and other changes between ages ten and 14. However, not all students will exhibit typical characteristics. This publication focuses only on those characteristics of young adolescents that are affected directly by participation in athletic programs, which can be summarized as characteristics related to growth, development, and social and other needs.

Growth. Height, weight, body proportions, and the size of organs of digestion and respiration change radically during this stage of development and have specific effects on athletic participation.

Development. Physical abilities, sex characteristics, and ethical standards develop during young adolescence, and an appropriate middle-level athletic program can help students adjust to these changes.

Social and other needs. Young adolescents tend to have feelings of social and personal inadequacy. A poor athletic program can inappropriately strengthen these feelings, yielding damaging results that can last a lifetime. Children in this age group also crave positive relationships outside the home and social experiences in peer groups. A good middle-level athletic program can provide for these needs in a positive way that will strengthen children for life.

The following information lists selected characteristics of the young adolescent and describes how middle-level athletic programs should take these characteristics into account. These characteristics and implications have been reviewed and adapted by experts in middle-level athletics and middle-level education.

- growth in height, weight, and body proportions
- growth in organs of digestion and respiration
- growth in sex characteristics
- development of physical abilities
- need for positive relationships outside the home
- substitution of peer-group standards for those of family
- need for social experiences in groups
- feelings of social and personal inadequacy
- development of ethical standards

Growth in Height, Weight, and Body Proportions

Rapid increase in height

Children in the middle-level grades tend to display awkwardness and postural defects as they experience the "growth spurt" associated with early adolescence. Size and maturity do not necessarily develop simultaneously. The "large" adolescent may be relatively immature

and may experience feelings of inadequacy at his or her inability to live up to adult expectations in performance and behavior.

Implications

- The athletics program should be appropriate to each pupil's physical maturity rather than to his or her chronological age or class membership.
- Avoiding overemphasis on competitive sports will prevent or minimize fatigue.
- Students need guidance in planning extracurricular activities in harmony with their individual energy and resistance levels.
- A sufficiently wide variety of activities should be offered, guaranteeing students a range of choices.
- Young adolescents should be offered opportunities to learn to be considerate of others and sensitive to their feelings.

Rapid Increase in Weight

Society's ideal image of a slender body is often in conflict with healthy body development. Even slight plumpness is often disturbing to young adolescents who may attempt to reduce their food intake far below what is essential for normal growth. Severe eating patterns that sometimes lead to anorexia and bulimia are evident at this stage of development. Adolescents abhor excessive fat, since it interferes with an unrealistic self-image or athletic performance in such sports as wrestling or track. Positive attempts to overcome these expectations can help reinforce healthy choices.

Implications

- Physical education teachers, coaches, and others in the middle-level athletic program should be alert to evidence that students are concerned or worried about their weight and body build.
- Athletic programs should provide reliable information regarding body development and the wide range of individual differences in body proportions during adolescence.
- Athletics should be used to guide young adolescents and reinforce the basic nutritional facts and good food choices as part of every training regimen.

Wide Variations in Physical Development within the Normal Range

In general, girls between ages eight and 12 and boys between ages nine and 13 experience striking differences in height, weight, and body contour and development. Students may feel embarrassed about these changes in body build, especially if the changes are accelerated or retarded or if they distinguish the child from the group. In addition, small stature can be viewed as a handicap to boys who seek prestige through athletic ability.

Implications

- The athletic program should acquaint boys and girls with information that indicates the wide range in the ages at which sexual maturation occurs. It is also important for young adolescents to understand and appreciate their many different sizes and shapes.
- A varied program of activities will provide all students, even those representing the extremes of physical growth, opportunities to participate in ways that give them success and self-esteem.

Disproportionate Growth of Arms, Legs, Hands, and Feet

For a period of six to 18 months, young adolescents may find themselves disproportionately long-legged and long-armed. Often this disproportionate growth in the body's extremities is accompanied by a temporary awkwardness in gait and posture.

Implications

- The awkward and embarrassed young athlete needs sympathetic understanding. Ridicule, sarcasm, or other measures that increase embarrassment can yield a lifelong sense of shame and loss of self-esteem.
- Showing-off and other types of defensive behavior should be recognized as possible evidence of embarrassment and should be treated with intelligent guidance.
- The athletic program can provide physical activities that help young adolescents gain better control of their bodies.

Uneven Growth of Bones and Muscles

Bones sometimes grow more rapidly than the muscles adhering to them, which causes muscle cramps. And muscles sometimes grow more rapidly than bones, producing awkwardness. In either case, patterns of coordination are disturbed.

Implications

- The athletic program should harmonize with students' growth and coordination patterns.
- Intensive competition and overexertion should be eliminated.

Growth in Organs of Digestion and Respiration

Rapid Growth of Heart and Arteries

The heart and arteries grow rapidly during young adolescence and systolic blood pressure increases. If students are free from organic defects, vigorous exercise helps the heart and circulatory system become more efficient and the muscles become stronger. Rapid growth plus students' tremendous urge to demonstrate their physical skill as a means of social recognition may easily result in overexertion and chronic fatigue or in an unbalanced program of daily activities.

It is important that young adolescents receive thorough medical diagnosis before engaging in athletic programs. Functional heart murmurs are not uncommon at this age. Cursory examination cannot discriminate between the temporary disorder and an organic defect.

Implications

- The middle-level athletic program should guide young adolescents in understanding their own physical development and their own need to develop a lifestyle that includes regular exercise.
- A sufficiently rich program will provide every boy and girl both the social and physical benefits of participation in team games and other activities.

- Highly competitive activities should be eliminated. Instead, programs should feature activities that provide opportunity for young adolescents with various levels of body development and athletic skill to experience success, including children with special needs.
- Children's families can be allies in developing an appropriate athletic program. Educators should work with family members to establish a daily program that provides for the young adolescent an appropriate balance of exercise, relaxation, and sleep.

Growth in Sex Characteristics

Increased Activity of Gonadal Sex Hormones

Boys and girls continue to produce both male and female hormones. However, after about 11 years of age, hormone production in both boys and girls increases so that important differences between the sexes become established. Development of breasts or testes is often accompanied by bewilderment, ridicule, unwelcome attention, or anxiety, especially if no attempt has been made to prepare young adolescents for these changes.

Implications

- The athletic program can help young adolescents consider the feelings of other children in their age group by recognizing when they are being considerate and by helping them become aware of the situations that can embarrass themselves and others.
- Educators, coaches, and others should exhibit a healthy, wholesome attitude toward sex and its functions. They should avoid evidence of embarrassment when discussing health or development issues with young adolescents, and they should have a sufficiently accurate background of information in and correct terminology for these topics. A supply of sanitary products should be available for female athletes.

Development of Physical Abilities

Increase in Manual Strength

Until about age 14, boys and girls show similar growth curves. After that, the two sexes' rate of growth diverges sharply, with boys doubling their weight between ages 11 and 16. The period of most rapid growth in strength is between ages 12 and 13 in girls and between 15 and 16 in boys. There appears to be an exceptionally wide range of individual differences in growth of strength for boys and girls, and the greatest increase in strength appears to occur near the onset of puberty.

During this period of the adolescent's rapid growth, adults may overestimate a boy's strength. Even though his height and weight have increased significantly, he may look more capable of heavy work than he actually is.

Implications

- Coaches, teachers, and others should observe each middle-level athlete for evidence of fatigue and should understand that so-called "adolescent laziness" is often related to fatigue during periods of rapid growth.
- Young adolescents need periodic relaxation, and they can learn this in an athletic program.
- Adequate food intake at frequent intervals will help middle-level students maintain their energy.

- Athletic activities must never overestimate a child's strength simply on the basis of his or her height and weight. Let the child determine whether he or she is strong enough to perform a task.

The Relation of Physical Abilities to Social Functions

Athletic ability is a source of social esteem for young adolescents.

Implication

- Schools and communities should cooperate in providing ample opportunity and school-sponsored support for all students to participate and gain esteem through appropriate physical activities.

Need for Positive Relationships Outside the Home

Selection of Role Models

Status with peer groups does not replace the importance of close relationships with other adults. Outside the home, the young adolescent tends to identify with an admired adult. An adult who handles this relationship wisely and responsibly provides a role model for the adolescent. Middle-level athletic programs offer extensive opportunities for healthy adult modeling as young adolescents interact with physical education teachers and coaches.

Implications

- The personality, character, and behavior of adults in middle-level athletic programs influence young adolescents. Adults should be aware of the effects of their behavior on young adolescents.
- Coaches should be selected for their personal qualities; they should exert a wholesome, steadying influence on young athletes.
- While young adolescents need support and acceptance, adults must guard against establishing an overdependent relationship and must handle "crushes" intelligently.

Substitution of Peer-Group Standards for Those of Family

Exaggerated Desire to Conform to Peer-Group Standards

It is important to young adolescents that they dress alike, behave alike, use the same language and idiom, eat the same foods, and take the same subjects in school. This extreme conformity serves a positive role for young adolescents: it provides them security and a sense of belonging as they attempt to break away from parental control. Since there is nothing quite so disturbing to the young adolescent as feeling different from his or her peers, differences presented by race, religion, age, physical ability, national origin, affectional preference, or gender may interfere with their own feelings of acceptance and self-worth.

Implications

- Policies that make it possible for athletes from all socioeconomic levels to participate on equal terms ensure that some students aren't left out. For instance, financial assistance may be made available, if necessary.
- The athletic program can teach students to offer opportunities to feel accepted to those who are less secure, thus guiding young adolescents in becoming sensitive to the feelings of others.
- Coaches must ensure that differences do not affect the opportunity for all young adolescents to participate in the activity.

Need for Social Experiences in Groups

Importance of Group Membership

Young adolescents are interested in group activities. Clubs, teams, or other social organizations help enlarge their circle of social contacts and provide opportunities for learning about the give-and-take of group enterprise. Failure to make a team or to be invited to join a club may result in unhappiness and feelings of exclusion and rejection.

Implications

- By scheduling clubs, team practices, and other activities during the school day, the program will not deny anyone an opportunity to participate because of home duties, part-time work, or difficulties with transportation.
- Providing reinforcement for socially sensitive behavior encourages young adolescents to be inclusive in their friendships and generous in their desire to share leadership positions with others.

Feelings of Social and Personal Inadequacy

Wide Swings Between Childish and Adult Behavior

Young adolescents who have rapidly gained in height and weight and whose body development makes them appear adult do not consistently feel as mature as they look. At times they engage in behavior that corresponds to their physical development, while at others they act in childish ways. Middle-level students have a tendency to compensate for feelings of insecurity by indulging in attention-seeking behavior such as conspicuous dress and loud talk.

Implication

- All participants in the athletic program can cooperate to create a social atmosphere that helps all young adolescents involved with the activity feel accepted.

Tendency Toward Exaggerated Emotional Response

In their attempt to accept their changing bodies and to assume comfortable sex roles, young adolescents are likely to be under emotional stress. They need time to assimilate the changes they experience and opportunities to work out their feelings. In the face of even

minor frustrations they may show heightened emotional reactions of anger, fear, or embarrassment. They are apt to be oversensitive to criticism, teasing, and any real or imagined inadequacy. They may cry or giggle easily.

Implications

- Adults in the athletic program can use situations in which the group faces failure or disappointment for guided group evaluation and for analyzing the variety of responses the situation might elicit. These experiences can guide young adolescents in learning to face failure constructively as they learn the difference between intelligent and unintelligent responses to these situations.
- Individual boys and girls who show exaggerated reactions of anger, embarrassment, or fear can be guided in self-evaluation, which can help them learn to take failures in stride. Adults can teach them to balance their strengths and weaknesses and not to be overconcerned with weaknesses, trying to correct them intelligently rather than dwelling on them.
- By adjusting athletic activities to the needs of each pupil, the program ensures all participants will feel reasonably successful most of the time.
- Adults should accept overemotional behavior as typical at this development level and refrain from sarcasm, irrational penalties, or other forms of retaliation. They also should offer appreciation to pupils who are considerate of others and who model emotional maturity.

Tendency to Daydream and Be Easily Distracted

The personal problems or fears young adolescents face may be far more engrossing to them than the outside world. Problems of status or self-esteem also may consume their attention or energy. Studies show that at this age, young girls specifically begin to lose self-esteem and that loss carries over into educational, career, and other adult behaviors.

Implications

- The athletic program can serve as a means for redirecting young adolescents away from their pre-occupation with personal problems.
- Adults in the athletic program should understand the reasons why many young adolescents are easily distracted and prone to daydreaming. Adults should refrain from labeling them "lazy," "indolent," or "discourteous" and should look beneath these behaviors for their sources. Adults need to provide for activities that address the lack of self-esteem that many girls, in particular, face at this age. Teaching and coaching methods that are cognizant of gender-based learning styles and student reactions can help.

Development of Ethical Standards

Developing Ideals and Standards of Conduct

Young adolescents become interested in problems of ethics and morality and begin to challenge the ethical and moral precepts by which parents have guided them as small children. They become aware of inconsistencies in codes of conduct that adults profess and those they practice, and thereby are encouraged to begin to develop a measure of responsible self-determination in conduct. They grow to accept standards that are supported by reason.

With greater maturity, boys and girls are increasingly able to generalize from their experiences and to develop ideals as controls of behavior. These ideals become increasingly socially oriented, in harmony with a fuller life.

As they face the task of working out a basis for self-respect and consideration for others, young adolescents are greatly influenced by the expectations of those whom they love and respect.

Implications

- Middle-level athletic programs can help young adolescents become increasingly responsible for their own conduct by teaching them to evaluate their behavior according to the standards established for each activity.
- Coaches, physical education teachers, and others should help young adolescents relate the activities and learning experiences in which they're engaged to larger goals. This helps them learn to generalize from specific experiences and thus encourages them as they attempt to build values to guide them throughout life.
- Coaches should appreciate the need for consistent behavior and take seriously their importance as role models for young adolescents.

Philosophy and Recommendations

The developmental characteristics of young adolescents that were described in the previous chapter provide the foundation for an athletic program's philosophy and goals. These characteristics, along with information from guest speakers and related research and information, were used by the statewide advisory Middle-Level Athletics Task Force in formulating the philosophy and goals for an athletic program for young adolescents.

Following the philosophy statement below are six program goals. Each goal is further described through explanation points. Documentation to support the program goals are cross-referenced in a matrix at the beginning of the Appendixes.

Program Philosophy

The mission of middle-level athletics is to provide an enjoyable educational experience for young adolescents based on their developmental characteristics and needs. The development of the young adolescent's self-esteem, citizenship, responsibility, and skills in cooperative and leadership behaviors are positive outcomes of appropriate middle-level athletic programs. These programs should be enjoyable, vigorous, and safe and should occur in a positive climate with appropriate adult leadership and support. Effective middle-level athletic programs are coordinated with other school and community activities to offer additional opportunities for young adolescents to explore varied interests. Middle-level athletics are an essential part of the total educational process and an excellent opportunity for the home, school, and community to work together.

Program Goal 1

The developmental characteristics of young adolescents should provide the foundation for the middle-level athletics program philosophy and goals.

a. Programs for young adolescents should be developed with concern for their different levels of maturity and wide range of physical development.
b. Programs should provide a variety of activities that allow for participation and exploration. Emphasis should be on development of individual skills and cooperative group behaviors.
c. Athletics should offer an opportunity for young adolescents to transfer and reinforce learning from academic areas while improving social, emotional, and physical skills.
d. Athletic participation for young adolescents should build positive self-esteem.
e. "Fun" is an important reason given by young adolescents for participating in athletics. Young adolescents are not varsity level or professional athletes.
f. Any input from special-interest groups within the school or community should reflect what is developmentally or culturally appropriate for the young adolescent (for example, finding activities such as soccer, that are more widely known and practiced in southeastern Asian and Hispanic cultures).
g. Experiences in competitive events with the accompanying wins and losses should provide a positive learning experience for the athlete. Adults must provide the positive leadership through effective modeling of their own behavior.
h. Cooperative events may be more attractive than competitive events to some students.

Research Rationale

Young adolescents experience a unique stage of development—physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Programs for early adolescents must be developed with concern for participants' level of maturity. Programs must reflect the wide range of needs early adolescents display. According to J. Aldous, who is cited in *Moving Into Adolescence* by Robert G. Simmons and Dale A. Blyth,

> A primary task of early and middle adolescence is to achieve a new and positive sense of self in response to the many changes that occur at that age. Perhaps most dramatic are the biological changes and the alterations in physical appearance that require a change in the body image and in the relevant self-evaluations. At a more global or general level, the adolescent should develop a new acceptance of the self as a person of worth, that is, a favorable level of self-esteem.

Young adolescents are in the midst of rapid change. Joan Lipsitz cites in her book, *Growing Up Forgotten,* Gilman Graves' research that states, "Puberty, next to birth itself, is the most drastic change we experience in life, but unlike birth, we are acutely aware of the exciting transitions through which we pass. . . ." Lipsitz refers us to the famous work of James Tanner, author of *Growth at Adolescence,* who "stresses continually the different ages at which children begin their growth spurts and pubertal changes, as well as the variation of pubertal patterns." Lipsitz also cites the work of James Clausen, who states: "Differences in size, weight, and performance between early and late maturers will be greatest for girls at ages 12 through 14 (during the junior high period), and for boys between 14 through 16 (toward the end of junior high and the beginning of high school)." In the same book, one of the most well-known researchers and writers on adolescent social-emotional development, David Elkind, is cited. The book states,

> During adolescence the major problem is the conflict of thought, which is said to give rise to two mental constructions, 'the imaginary audience,' and 'the personal fable,' the former being related to self-consciousness and the latter to personal feelings of uniqueness. The adolescent's belief that others are preoccupied with his appearance and behavior constitutes his egocentrism according to Elkind. In social situations the young adolescent anticipates the reaction of other people to himself, assuming constantly that others are as admiring or critical of him as he is of himself. In this sense, then, the adolescent is constructing or reacting to an imaginary audience. Thus, the adolescent fails to differentiate his own concerns from those of others. At the same time, he overdifferentiates his own feelings. 'Perhaps because he believes he is of importance to so many people, the imaginary audience, he comes to regard himself, and particularly his feelings, as something special and unique. . . . This complex of beliefs in the uniqueness of his feelings and his immortality might be called a personal fable, a story which he tells himself and which is not true.'

Athletics offer young adolescents an opportunity to develop cognitive and social-emotional skills that help them work cooperatively with others while developing and improving physical skills. Laurence Steinberg and Ann Levine, in their book *You and Your Adolescent,* state that well-run team sports programs can, "contribute to physical fitness and coordination, occupy the adolescent in healthy activity during afterschool hours, teach skills that will

be valuable later on, and contribute to self-esteem by enhancing the adolescent's status among peers."

Athletic participation for young adolescents should be a positive educational experience. Programs should provide a variety of activities that allow for participation and exploration. According to Lipsitz, "Early adolescents need to try on a wide variety of roles. Early adolescents need space and experience to 'be' different persons at different times." John Van Hoose and David Strahan comment on exploration in their monograph, *Young Adolescent Development and School Practices: Promoting Harmony.*

> In successful schools, students have choices. They participate in a variety of exploratory learning opportunities in enrichment programs and in their content classes. They have many opportunities to discuss their ideas and to select project options that allow them to express those ideas.

Adults involved in middle-level athletics must know that early adolescents are children who desire to have fun. They are not varsity level or professional athletes. They must be allowed to develop at their own pace. A 1987 study conducted by Vern Seefeldt and Martha Ewing at Michigan State University for the Athletic Footwear Association (see Appendix A) states: "When asked . . . to identify the single most important reason for participating in a school sport, 'to have fun' was a clear winner among 3,500 boys and 3,000 girls who answered the question."

Young adolescents are looking for ways to enjoy themselves through physical and social activity. Socialization needs can be met through participation in athletics. Coaches and program directors must consider the young adolescent's need and desire for a positive, fun experience when developing philosophies and goals. Positive experiences in athletics should not be dictated by winning alone. In *You and Your Adolescent,* Steinberg and Levine offer that, "team sports build character by teaching the importance of effort, sportsmanship, teamwork, and how to deal gracefully with both winning and losing."

They caution, however, that a poorly run program can "teach the wrong lessons, such as the importance of winning, instead of the importance of trying hard and doing something well; and take the fun out of an activity that would otherwise be intrinsically enjoyable through undue pressure to win from parents and coaches, mockery of mediocre players, and the like."

Special-interest groups within the school and community should be used to positively influence the program. They should not be allowed to negatively influence programs that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. Steinberg and Levine concluded in their research that "studies find that it is usually parents, not coaches, who apply the wrong kind of pressure to young athletes." They also caution,

> Sports is an arena where parents are especially prone to projecting their fantasies onto their adolescents. A father who misses the glory days of his athletic stardom may live vicariously through his son, ignoring hints that the teenager wants out. A mother who was a total klutz may feel vindicated when her daughter wins a tennis tournament. If her daughter works up the courage to say she doesn't want individual lessons every week (she'd rather be with friends or just read) plus five weeks at tennis camp, the mother doesn't hear. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your adolescent's accomplishments, in sports or any other activity. Just be sure you aren't forcing the adolescent into something he or she doesn't enjoy.

Program Goal 2

Coaches, parents, athletic directors, administrators, school board members, and community leaders need to be knowledgeable about the characteristics and needs of young adolescents, as well as appropriate coaching strategies and role model behaviors for them. The program's philosophy and expectations should be supported by all those involved in the program.

a. Athletic programs must function within the framework of the school district's and/or community's goals and objectives. Adults who administer, coach, and support middle-level athletics should develop an athletic program that meets these goals and objectives.
b. Middle-level athletic programs should not be a "feeder system" for high school teams. These programs exist for the welfare of the young adolescent participants.
c. The philosophy and program expectations should be clearly identified in a policy handbook.
d. Athletic programs for young adolescents should include orientation meetings with coaches and parents to discuss the philosophy and objectives of the program as identified in the policy handbook.
e. Coaches and parents should be provided with staff development opportunities in order to understand the needs and characteristics of young adolescents as well as program goals and objectives.
f. The school district and/or community program must provide support for coaches, particularly when parents question coaching practices that follow the program's philosophy and objectives.
g. Abusive and foul language have no place in athletic programs. Coaches, parents, participants, and fans must recognize their responsibility to model appropriate behavior for young adolescents.
h. Equipment and facilities should be specifically designed to provide for a safe and healthy athletic experience for the young adolescent.
i. Extraneous and expensive trappings usually associated with varsity level sports, such as special warm-ups, are not necessary in any middle-level activity and should be discouraged.

Research Rationale

Coaches should demonstrate a knowledge of the young adolescent, a knowledge of the sport, an agreement with the program philosophy, a positive and encouraging attitude, and a positive role model for young adolescents. Steinberg and Levine tell parents to consider whether the coach or supervisor puts athletics in the proper perspective. "Most coaches recognize team sports are an extracurricular activity, not a career. Some keep an eye on their players' academic performance, even as unofficial advisor. But some put the team first and expect players to do the same."

Coaches also should be provided with knowledge of the developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents in order to develop and provide age-appropriate training for practices and games. In the survey by Seefeldt and Ewing, the youths interviewed said they would like to see more enjoyable practice sessions and more understanding coaches.

Middle-level athletic programs also must be safe and healthy experiences with proper equipment and facilities. Steinberg and Levine suggest that parents ask themselves the following questions about their children's athletic experiences:

- Is the coaching staff safety conscious?
- Are players given a medical screening before being accepted on a team?
- Are workouts designed to build strength and flexibility and to minimize the risk of injury?
- Is the proper equipment being used?
- Do coaches treat injuries seriously or expect players to be tough and play, even when they are in pain?

Program Goal 3

Programs should promote behaviors that include cooperation, sportsmanship, and personal improvement. Winning is not the primary goal of the program.

a. As Vince Lombardi said, "Winning isn't the only thing, but striving to win is." Winning is less important than preparing to win. For young adolescents, losing should not be the same as failure, nor success the same as winning. Middle-level athletics should reward positive effort regardless of the outcome of a game.
b. Experiences in competitive events with the accompanying wins and losses should provide an important learning experience for young adolescents as should cooperative events with provisions for team building.
c. Varsity-type atmospheres and individual awards should be avoided. Programs that give trophies or medals for winning convey a message that winning is the primary objective.

Research Rationale

Winning should not be the primary goal of the program. Emphasis should be on development of individual and group skills and goals. According to Strahan and Van Hoose, "students (in successful schools) have many opportunities to work with each other rather than against each other. Team projects, peer tutoring, and large-group activities are only three of the many ways students can work together."

Making the Middle Grades Work by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) emphasizes that positive programs for early adolescents "teach values such as hard work, personal responsibility, honesty, cooperation, self-discipline, freedom, appreciation of human diversity, the importance of education, truth, goodness, beauty, and reality, which should be examined within the context of any subject."

Competition, winning, and losing are experiences that many young adolescents need to experience at their own pace. All individuals involved in early adolescent athletics must acknowledge the wide range of development in the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional lives of young adolescents. Seefeldt and Ewing found in their 1987 study that "in several different questions probing reasons for being involved in sports, winning never ranked higher than seventh."

Program Goal 4

The program should be open to all young adolescents and provide a positive experience. All young adolescents should have the opportunity to participate, play, and experience skill improvement. Formation of teams should be determined by the number of young adolescents interested in the program.

a. A well-designed athletic program responds to a variety of needs. Program directors, coaches, parents, community members, and teammates need to know that youths participate in sports for many reasons. Coaches must be sensitive to the individual needs of participants.

b. Policies for athletic activities should promote the participation (remove barriers) for young adolescents with exceptional educational needs, including non-English speaking ability, as well as those whose financial status may discourage participation in activities outside the classroom.
c. When large numbers of young adolescents are involved in an athletic program, coaches should include all team members as frequently as possible.
d. Athletic programs for young adolescents are not "feeder systems" for high school athletics. Given the rapid and varying development of youths at this age, it is impossible to predict future athletic capability in high school based on performance during the young adolescent years.
e. Appropriately designed and coached programs can be satisfying for young adolescents exhibiting various skill levels. Participation should be determined by interest rather than skill during the middle-level years. Athletic activities are valuable for all young adolescents and should not be limited to the gifted or early maturing athlete.
f. Districts and communities should schedule competitions with other groups whose program philosophies align with the needs of young adolescents.

Research Rationale

Adults responsible for the program must remember that athletics can be the most positive aspect in the young adolescent's day. Steinberg and Levine point out that

> extracurriculars can build a bridge between the school and the student who is not particularly interested in, or successful at, academics. The visible, public nature of a performance on the basketball court . . . can be a powerful incentive for the student who is not motivated by grades or praise from teachers. Some teenagers show up because of their commitment to a team, not because of their interest in classes. But involvement in the school through extracurriculars can spill over into the classroom.

All young adolescents should have the opportunity to play. Some athletes join a team to enjoy the companionship of peers, and the need to belong should be addressed. Program directors, coaches, parents, community members, and teammates need to know that students participate for various reasons during young adolescence. A well-designed program responds to these different needs. There may be instances when a team member wants to participate in practice, but does not want to perform in competition. Coaches must be sensitive to individual needs. Steinberg and Levine emphasize this point in their book, *You and Your Adolescent*. "Don't assume that just because your adolescent is on the starting team, he is loving football—or that just because he's on the bench, he is not. Adolescents participate in team sports for a variety of reasons. Some like the camaraderie; some enjoy the status . . . others love the game."

Participation in athletics must provide an opportunity for all young adolescents to experience success. Schools and communities must examine whether athletic programs allow for participation by students with exceptional educational needs (EEN), as well as students who have difficulty responding to financial demands of an athletic program. All students should have an equal opportunity to participate.

Program Goal 5

Each activity should have a predetermined season. Athletic activities, including practice schedules, should be flexible, with concern for student conflicts and family schedules.

Schedules should allow young adolescents to participate in a variety of programs, including nonathletic activities.

a. By structuring athletic seasons with established dates for practices and games, opportunities for participation in other co-curricular activities increase, and scheduling conflicts are lessened.
b. The length of seasons and number of contests per season should be designed to provide young adolescents the opportunity to participate in a number of different activities. At this age, young adolescents should not focus on any one activity, sport, or other interest. Young adolescents need experiences that encompass a wide range of activities. This should be a period of exploration rather than specialization.
c. To allow young adolescents the opportunity of wide participation, practice and game schedules should be made available to families. Schedules should be adhered to whenever possible. Conflicts that arise from changes are disruptive to family plans as well as to requirements for school programs.
d. Development of schedules among different school and community groups should be coordinated. When scheduling conflicts arise, supervising adults should work out a compromise to avoid putting the young adolescent in the middle of the conflict.
e. Scheduling athletic activities for young adolescents during late evening hours on school nights is not appropriate.
f. All programs should provide athletic opportunities that are comparable in type, scope, and support for male and female participants (see Appendix D for legal requirements).

Research Rationale

The length of seasons and number of contests per season should be designed to provide young adolescents the opportunity to participate in many different activities. The CDF publication *Making the Middle Grades Work* says,

> Whenever possible, scheduling should be flexible to meet students' diverse needs. To address the needs of a diverse student body, curricula should engross students in learning and help them to develop a wide range of skills. Curricula may include interdisciplinary units that reinforce basic concepts and skills across core subjects . . . extracurricular activities such as athletics, music, art literary publications, and student government.

A wider variety of opportunities can be offered when athletic seasons are short and scheduled at nontraditional times of the year. Middle-level athletic programs should provide a wide variety of activities. No one activity, sport, or other interest should be allowed to dominate a young adolescent's time and concentration. Young adolescents need experiences that encompass a wide range of activities. This is a period of exploration rather than specialization. Steinberg and Levine state that if team sports occupy a disproportionate amount of the child's time, it can "distract the adolescent from other equally valuable activities, including school work, other extracurriculars, and hobbies."

Young adolescents and their parents need to know practice and playing schedules, as well as locations of practices and games. Schedules must be followed. Alteration of schedules disrupts family schedules, particularly when family activities are arranged around practices and games. Athletes and parents must be informed as soon as possible when rescheduling is necessary. Seefeldt and Ewing discovered in their 1987 study that those surveyed would like to see fewer schedule conflicts in sports. Many communities have a variety of programs providing athletic activities for young adolescents. Each group is

dedicated to providing a quality athletic experience for young adolescents. To maximize the positive sports experiences and minimize conflicts for the participants, coordination and communication needs to exist between those organizations. Supervising adults should negotiate schedule conflicts to avoid putting the young adolescent in the middle. Schools and communities should work together to coordinate their schedules and promote opportunities for young adolescents to participate in activities.

Program Goal 6

Athletic programs should have clear, written policies that reflect the needs of young adolescents. Policies should be concise and should include student expectations and guidelines for coaches, parents, and spectators. To develop policy, districts should form an advisory committee for co-curricular policy development with representation from the school, parents, and other athletic associations within the community.

a. Middle-level athletic policy should align with the developmental characteristics and needs of young adolescents. Eligibility, length of season, and discipline by coaches are some examples of items that address the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of the young adolescent and should be included in these policies.
b. The athletic policy should clarify how a school determines whether school-day disciplinary actions will affect participation in afterschool athletics. Policies must be clear to parents, students, and coaches prior to participation.
c. The athletic policy should reflect equal access to the programs by all students. Student populations with special needs (at-risk, EEN, and so forth) should be addressed in the athletic policy.
d. Involvement by parents and athletic interest groups within the school and community is essential if there is to be agreement, understanding, and support of the middle-level athletic program. These groups should be involved in translating a middle-level program philosophy into policies.
e. Input for policy development should include representation from the school, parents, and private providers.
f. Appropriate middle-level athletic programs depend on effective organization and implementation. The school administration and community program director have the responsibility to guide, communicate, and enforce the middle-level athletic philosophy and program.
g. Involvement in policy development should include the provision for language translation for non-English speaking parents and for meetings to be held in the parents' communities, such as on reservations or at community centers.

Research Rationale

Little, if any, research exists concerning philosophy and goals for athletic programs. The rationale for this goal is drawn from other sources including the following example from the DPI publication *The Middle-Level Grades In Wisconsin: Where We Are: Where We Need To Be*. In this book about effective middle schools, the mission statement (philosophy and goals) is presented as the foundation for all decisions regarding the school program.

- "Curriculum, school organization, learning environment, role of the classroom teacher, and all aspects of the school program are based on the mission for the middle-level grades.
- The mission statement reflects the physical, social, emotional, intellctual, cultural, aesthetic, and moral needs of students.

- The faculty and community form a consensus on program expectations for middle-level students based on the mission statement and school objectives.
- All decisions regarding programs and practices occur in the framework of what is in the best interest of students.
- Administration, staff, parents, and students understand the purpose for their school programs."

Each program principal operates in harmony with the others to support the mission of the organization. In the same way, the mission of an athletic program is key to all decisions regarding athletic program practices. Conflicting opinions, whether from participants, coaches, parents, or fans, can be measured next to the philosophy and goals. Decisions made within such a context provide a powerful force in promoting program practices that support the healthy development of young adolescents.

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Questions and Answers about Middle-Level Athletics

Coaches

1. **Coaches are often under pressure from parents to push teams to win at all costs. How can we ensure that coaches will follow district policies developed for middle-level athletics?**
   Coaches will follow these policies when they feel confident of support from administrators despite parents pressing the coaches to win. This administrative support is a crucial element of a successful middle-level athletic program.

2. **When large numbers of students participate in a particular athletic activity, what strategies can coaches use to manage them?**
   - Some schools require that all members of the team participate, with each having to sit out a portion of the game. Under this system, coaches need to decide on the substitution procedure before the contest to ensure a smooth, consistent process during the game. Many coaches create a substitute "script" that spells out everyone's role in the game.
   - Teams with large numbers of players can request that each student select a certain number of games to sit out. This lets coaches work with a manageable number of athletes per game, ensuring a higher-quality participation for each athlete.
   - Limited availability of uniforms may require rotating players from game to game.
   - Schools could form teams with large numbers of players and determine standards that would allow different players to "suit up." Participation in games could be based on such behaviors as attendance at practices, cooperation, or "hustle" effort.

Equipment

3. **How do we know whether certain equipment constitutes "extraneous frills"?**
   Extraneous frills are items teams use that are not necessary to run the athletic program or to ensure safe participation. Their purchase often requires a team to organize a fund-raising event. Examples include special equipment such as football-helmet decals that summarize the number of quarterbacks sacked, team socks, shooter shirts, or warm-up suits with custom screen printing or colors.

   Since the goal of middle-level athletics is to promote skill development, the focus should be on purchasing only the equipment necessary to ensure each athlete's safety. Frills should be left to upper-level programs. As for necessary equipment, if a school will not pay for it, this raises serious questions about the school's commitment to the safety of middle-level athletes. It is, after all, the school's responsibility to provide safety equipment. If schools cannot provide this equipment and the responsibility for purchasing it falls to parents, this will restrict some students from participating.

4. **Our basketball team has 23 members, but we can't afford uniforms for all of them. We know that this shouldn't limit our team's participation, but, we want our athletes to have uniforms. What can we do?**
   Sometimes high school or college standards are inappropriately applied to middle-level athletics. In this case, the school's athletic program managers should think about what garments are required in a uniform. For example, who set the standard that a basketball uniform must consist of a matching, screen printed, two-piece set and a coordinating warm-up suit? The middle-level athletic program can reject these standards in favor of alternative ways to provide uniforms. For instance, the school can purchase uniform T-shirts for both sexes and use them for all sports. The student would be responsible for providing shorts in the school color. When weather or the particular sport requires other clothing, other rules could be established to produce fair, cost-effective results.

Scheduling

5. **In our district, there are a number of coaches who schedule practices every Saturday and who schedule contests during the school week. It is an exhausting amount of participation for our middle-level students and their families. What can the district do?**
   The district's program philosophy should be changed to include specific statements about variables like number of practices, number of contests, and length of the athletic season. This philosophy should reflect the developmental needs of young adolescents and should be clearly spelled out for all involved.

Students with Exceptional Educational Needs

6. **We want to be fair to our students with exceptional needs. What consideration should we give them in trying to build them into our middle-level athletic program?**
   Students with special needs should have equal access to athletic activities. When grading procedures or student disabilities limit or prohibit students with special needs, opportunities for their participation should be addressed through alternative methods of access. If a student's physical disabilities prevent participation in a school program, other community agencies such as Special Olympics and Very Special Arts should be considered. Schools also should be aware of language-translation needs for non-English speaking students.

Athletic Seasons

7. **Should seasons for different sports overlap?**
   Ideally, there should be no overlap between the different seasons to ensure each athlete the opportunity to participate in various activities. However, availability of facilities, the size of teams, and other practical factors will come into play as you schedule athletic seasons and may result in some unavoidable overlap.

8. **In our community, there has been some pressure from outside organizations and from individuals who wish to extend the athletic season for elite programs that fall outside the schools' offerings. We'd like to make a solid argument against this. What can we say?**

Programs offered outside of the school district may result in scheduling conflicts for families. Note that increased cooperation and collaboration between school and community groups are key in determining activities and program priorities that are developmentally appropriate for the young adolescent. To eliminate this kind of conflict, the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) has a rule prohibiting athletes from participating in any other sports while they are on a school-sponsored team.

Team Formation

9. **If the middle-level school includes the ninth grade, under which jurisdiction does the ninth-grade athletic program fall?**
   If the ninth grade is included in the WIAA high school programs and schedules, ninth-grade students would then fall under the direction of the high school. This will include the athletic code, rules for eligibility, and all other issues.

10. **In our district we have teams with large numbers of participants. We want to provide opportunities for all students to participate by dividing the athletes into smaller, more manageable, teams. What suggestions do you have for determining team formation?**
    There are numerous methods you can use. Teams can be formed by physical development and ability, by dividing all levels of development and ability equally among the different teams, or by randomly grouping participants using the strategy of "pulling names out of a hat." Each strategy has its advantages and disadvantages. An important consideration is the philosophy and program practices in districts that may be competing with your players. It is important that all districts in your conference agree on program philosophy and team formation.

11. **How can we determine how much playing time each middle-level athlete should get?**
    In evaluating each athlete's performance and feeding that into a determination of playing time, try using these criteria.
    - Is the student unselfish in play? Does he or she give teammates opportunities to score?
    - Is the student willing to work as a team member as opposed to making herself or himself look good?
    - Does the student hustle at practice?
    - Does the student show respect for coaches, umpires, spectators, and other players?
    - Does the student listen to the coach's instructions and carry them out?

Policy Formation

12. **Who should we include on the advisory committee that formulates middle-level athletics policy?**
    The committee should have representatives from all groups whose interests will be affected by these policies. If a large population of your students is involved in outside sports organizations or teams, these also should be represented.

13. **What role does the school board serve in policy formation?**
    The advisory committee makes recommendations to the board, which reviews them and makes decisions based on the district's needs.

14. **What if some students cannot afford to participate in activities?**
Districts are encouraged to create financial resources (such as athletic booster groups) to support the participation of financially needy students. Equal access opportunities through financial assistance could provide for student physical examinations (if the family cannot afford), fees, or other program requirements. If access is not available for all students, the district should consider dropping that activity.

15. **We want to recognize our student athletes, but we want it to be appropriate. What kinds of recognition can we provide?**
It is important for athletic-program participants to be rewarded for their effort and sporting behavior. However, as is the case with uniforms, discussed in question 4, districts should not apply high school standards to its middle-level athletic program where its recognition program is concerned. Awarding trophies has been a tradition in high school athletics. Although it is important for middle-level participants to be rewarded for effort and sportsmanship, other types of recognition are more appropriate for the middle level. The most appropriate recognition at this level comes in the form of certificates.

The middle-level program should consider awards in categories such as
- most improved player,
- best team player,
- student most likely to sacrifice for the team,
- leadership,
- sporting behavior, and
- most hustle.

16. **Every so often, we have to deal with overzealous spectators who use abusive or foul language. Any tips on what we can do?**
Setting the tone for sporting behavior among spectators can be done in a number of ways. Clear expectations should be expressed at meetings with parents. Pregame announcements can emphasize that negative comments and booing will not be allowed in the gym. No-swearing posters, similar in appearance to no-smoking signs, can be developed and posted around the gym.

17. **We're getting ready to develop general district policies for middle-level athletic programs. What areas need to be defined clearly and concisely?**
You may wish to scan this entire publication for ideas as you set about developing district middle-level athletic program policies. In general, you should address issues that directly affect the athletes and that maintain a positive atmosphere for athletes, their families, and others in the community. These would include
- how teams will be formed;
- how cuts, if any, will be managed;
- which teams will play which others;
- what the coaches' responsibilities include;
- whether all players will have playing time and how this will be established;
- whether all players will get equal playing time;
- what the district's attitude is toward winning and losing (that is, does the program exist to create winning teams or to get all players to participate); and,
- whether the program will meet the statutory requirements for sex equity as provided in s. 118.13, Wis. Stats.; Wisconsin Administrative Code; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (see Appendix P).

Appendixes
Cross-Reference Chart

Appendix	Goals					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
A. American Youth and Sports Participation		X	X	X		X
B. Meeting Young Adolescents' Needs	X				X	
C. Coaches' Leadership Style Can Affect Children's Self-Esteem		X	X			
D. Coaches' Responsibilities		X				X
E. Coaches' Code of Ethics		X	X			
F. The Fear of Failure		X	X			X
G. Winning Ways with Young Athletes		X	X	X		X
H. Interscholastic Athletics and Middle-Level Education			X	X		
I. Interscholastic Sports and the Early Adolescent		X	X	X	X	X
J. The Middle-Grades Learner	X	X				
K. Middle-Level Activities Programs: Helping Achieve Academic Success	X		X	X	X	X
L. If Winning Isn't Everything—How Can it Be the Only Thing?			X		X	
M. Parents' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities		X				X
N. Athlete/Spectator Behavior Poster		X				X
O. Sample Award Certificate			X	X		
P. Laws Prohibiting Discrimination		X	X	X		X

Appendix A

American Youth and Sports Participation

This report is reprinted with permission from the Athletic Footwear Association, North Palm Beach, Florida.

If Sports Are So Important, Why Do So Few Participate?

The influence of sports on the daily lives of young Americans—whether they compete or not—is profound.

Young athletes are generally admired, perhaps even worshipped, by their peers and a large segment of the general community. Sports and fitness activities are widely encouraged as healthy for the body, mind, and character. Sports experience is often viewed as valuable preparation for adult careers.

Yet, a relatively small proportion of high school students participate in any form of organized sports. If the benefits of participation are great, why do so many young people stay on the sidelines? Why do they drop out of sports? And what would it take to get them involved again?

In short, how do young people themselves feel about their involvement in sports? This appendix helps answer that question with highlights from a study involving more than 10,000 students in 11 American cities.

It is believed to be the largest such survey ever conducted. In the past, most surveys on this subject have been limited in scope, and reports of their results were confined largely to academic journals. This report is being circulated widely to encourage further discussion of the issues by all those concerned with young people and sports—parents, coaches, teachers, counselors, health and fitness experts, and journalists.

Highlights of the Study

- Sports participation and the desire to participate in sports decline sharply and steadily between ages ten and 18. For example, at age ten, 45 percent of young people say they participate, or intend to participate, on a nonschool team. Among 18-year-olds, the figure is 26 percent.
- "Fun" is a pivotal reason for being in a sport—and lack of fun is a leading reason for dropping out. It seems apparent that developing an understanding of what constitutes "fun" will be crucial in encouraging greater participation.
- Winning is not seen as a major benefit of sports by young people who participate. While victory is the most publicized aspect of sports, it is not a leading motivator for participation. Having fun, improving skills, staying in shape, and experiencing competition are some of the benefits rated as more important.
- Not all athletes, even successful ones, have the same motivations for involvement. The most dedicated athletes, for example, are those most strongly motivated by the desire to improve their skills, while others are more influenced by outside approval or pressure.

Participation: A Steady Decline, In School and Out

Sports participation, and the apparent desire to participate, decline steadily through the teen years. This decline cuts across almost all forms of organized sports, both in and out of school.

The students were asked, in several different questions, about sports or activities they "are participating in or intend to participate in." The nature of the question—asking for the indication of an intention—makes it highly likely that actual sports participation is even lower than the figures show.

Data from The National Federation of State High School Associations suggest that less than 21 percent of high school students are involved in even one school sport.

Social activities, and particularly dating, grow much more popular as youngsters mature, and these activities often replace sports. For example, only 16 percent of ten-year-olds said they were involved or intended to be involved in dating, compared with 77 percent among 18-year-olds.

"Watching TV" was the highest scoring activity among all age groups, scoring 87 percent among 18-year-olds. "Hanging out" with friends was listed by 81 percent of 18-year-olds.

"Fun:" A Pivotal Factor in Staying In Or Dropping Out of Sports

"Fun" is a crucial factor in the decision to remain involved in a sport or to drop out, as several questions in the survey make clear.

Boys and girls agree completely on the importance of fun in sports. Both sexes rank it as the top reason for being involved in their favorite sports, both say lack of fun is the second most important reason for dropping a sport, and both say making practices more fun is the most important change they would make in a sport they dropped.

While each individual may have a different definition of what's fun and what isn't, some clues can be found in other high-ranking answers to the questions.

For those who participate, fun entails such benefits as improving skills, staying in shape, taking satisfaction from one's performance, and competing against others.

For those who do drop out, "not fun" seems to involve pressure—pressure to perform, to win, to practice too much. The sense of play seems to have left the experience.

Boys seem to be more motivated by the process of sports, such as improving skills, participating, and competing, while girls seem slightly more attracted to benefits sports confer, such as being in shape and being part of a team.

When asked in a separate question to identify the single most important reason for participating in a school sport, "to have fun" was a clear winner among 3,500 boys and 3,000 girls who answered the question.

Winning: It Gets Low Grades

Winning, the most publicized and pursued goal of sports, is actually a relatively poor motivator for most junior and senior high school students. The study suggests that the path to excellent performance lies in motivating young people to embrace self-importance.

In several different questions probing reasons for being involved in sports, winning never ranked higher than seventh. Other rewards, from improving skills to gaining recognition to getting exercise, ranked higher.

The Ten Most Important Reasons I Play My Best School Sport

- To have fun
- To improve my skills
- To stay in shape
- To do something I'm good at
- For the excitement of competition
- To get exercise
- To play as part of a team
- For the challenge of competition
- To learn new skills
- To win

Sample: 2,000 boys and 1,900 girls, grade 7-12, who identified a "best" school sport. Answers were among 25 responses rated on a five-point scale.

For example, in one question, students were asked to think about a single experience in sports that made them feel successful and then rate 20 statements according to how they expressed that experience. The highest rated was "My performance made me feel good." In 13th place was "I won."

Even among the most dedicated athletes, winning took a back seat to self-improvement and competition. These athletes, isolated among the sample through analytical techniques, ranked winning in eighth place among reasons they played their best school sport—well below the number one reason: "To improve my skills."

When asked to select the single most important reason for playing their best school

sport, "to win" ranked in seventh place among boys. Among girls it placed tenth, tied with "learning new skills" and "team travel."

Spotting the Potential Dropout: Understanding Different Motivations for Participation

Motivation for involvement in sports is not the same at all ages. In an attempt to examine how motivations vary among different individuals, those who said they participate or intended to participate in sports were classified in three groups according to the way they rated a number of motivational factors.

The three groups tended to have the following characteristics:

Reluctant participants. Roughly 25 percent of respondents seemed to feel they "had to" be in sports because of outside pressure. They were more interested than those in other groups in being with friends and making new friends. They were less willing to play and practice hard. They were less likely to rate their abilities as being as good as others. Students in this group seem likely candidates to drop out during their school years.

Image-conscious socializers. While this group, representing 40 percent of the total, includes good athletes, they seem more inclined to draw their motivations from rewards or approval of others. Being perceived as good, feeling important, winning trophies, being popular, and staying in shape (looking good) are relatively more important for this group. Those in this group may continue to participate during their school years. But as outside reinforcements diminish, they are likely to quit sports and are unlikely to be lifelong participants.

Competence-oriented. This group is the most likely to continue sports after school. They practice and play harder yet their primary motivation is to improve their skills. This suggests they may be more interested in using sports to learn about themselves than to prove how skillful they are.

Toward a Definition of "Fun" in Sports

Since fun is apparently pivotal in experiencing sports, it's clearly important to define the concept. Steven J. Danish, professor and chairman of the Department of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, has studied, worked with, and written about athletes at all levels, from school-aged youngsters to world-class amateurs and professionals. Here is how he approaches the idea of sports and fun.

"Fun in sports might be described as the quest for the balance between challenge and skill. If they are relatively in balance, enjoyment results. The enjoyment is greatest when the individual sets his or her own personal challenges and personally assesses his or her own performance against these challenges.

"Put another way, the best challenges and greatest rewards in sports are intrinsic. They come from competing against yourself—against your own potential or goals—instead of focusing on the outcome of the contest, which is something over which you may have very little control.

The 11 Most Important Reasons I Stopped Playing a Sport

- I lost interest
- I was not having fun
- It took too much time
- Coach was a poor teacher
- Too much pressure (worry)
- Wanted nonsport activity
- I was tired of it
- Needed more study time
- Coach played favorites
- Sport was boring
- Overemphasis on winning

Sample: 2,700, boys and 3,100 girls who said they had recently stopped playing a school or nonschool sport. Answers above were among 30 responses rated on a five-point scale.

"When you compete against your own potential, you begin to learn things about yourself that are valuable not only in sports but in all of life. When young people perceive that the challenge of an activity is greater than their skills, anxiety results. If this imbalance persists, they may drop out.

"On the other hand, when an individual's skill exceeds the challenge, boredom can result. And this, too, can lead to dropping out.

"What is enjoyable for individuals will change with age. Even though boredom or anxiety may produce a dropout, the individuals may well turn to the same or another sport later on, especially if they can find something important about themselves in the activity.

"When knowing oneself becomes as important as proving oneself, sport becomes an essential element in personal growth and self-expression."

The Six Most Important Changes I Would Make To Get Involved Again in a Sport I Dropped

"I would play again if..."

Boys	Girls
• Practices were more fun	• Practices were more fun
• I could play more	• There was no conflict with studies
• Coaches understood players better	• Coaches understood players better
• There was no conflict with studies	• There was no conflict with social life
• Coaches were better teachers	• I could play more
• There was no conflict with social life	• Coaches were better teachers

Sample: 2,700 boys, 3,100 girls, 7-12th grade who said they had recently stopped playing a school or nonschool sport. They rated 21 different responses on a five-point scale.

The 12 Most Important Reasons I Play My Best School Sport

Boys	Girls
• To have fun	• To have fun
• To improve skills	• To stay in shape
• For the excitement of competition	• To get exercise
• To do something I'm good at	• To improve skills
• To stay in shape	• To do something I'm good at
• For the challenge of competition	• To be part of a team
• To be part of a team	• For the excitement of competition
• To win	• To learn new skills
• To go to a higher level of competition	• For the team spirit
• To get exercise	• For the challenge of competition
• To learn new skills	• To go to a higher level of competition
• For the team spirit	• To win

Sample: 2,000 boys, 1,900 girls, 7-12th grade who indicated they had a "best" school sport. They rated a total of 25 answers on a five-point scale.

What Adults Can Do: Suggestions for Leaders, Coaches, and Parents

For Leaders: Park and Recreation Directors, Athletic Directors, Youth Sports Programmers

- Choose staff members who understand the "truths" about young people and sports.
- Design activities that ensure enjoyment—that balance challenge and skill so that boredom and anxiety can be avoided.
- Recognize that what constitutes fun varies with the age and skill levels of the participants.
- Help parents become part of the team, not critics.
- Develop definitions of success that are not based solely on winning.

For Coaches

- Become a communicator (a listener and a giver of feedback).
- Recognize the needs of your kids and balance your needs with theirs.
- Develop perspective: remember what you were like at their age and what you could do then; don't judge the kids by what you can do now.
- Remember the "truths" and plan activities with them in mind.
- Seek out workshops and educational programs that teach not only sports-related skills but also communication and interpersonal skills that will help you work with parents and get the most out of your kids.
- Try to work with parents and make them part of the team rather than viewing them as critics to be avoided.

Truths About Children and Sports

- Fun is pivotal; if it's not "fun," young people won't play a sport
- Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun; it is more important than winning even among the best athletes.
- The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge.
- Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).

For Parents

- Remember the "truths" and talk to your children with them in mind (after a game, ask about "fun," "skill improvement," "learning experiences").
- See yourself as part of the team and supportive of the coach; avoid setting up a conflict in your child's mind between his or her parents and coaches. If you want to affect the coaching, volunteer to help.
- Develop perspective: remember what you could do at your children's ages; don't judge them by what you can do now.
- Develop an understanding of what your child wants from sports—not all children want the same things. Determine if he or she wants to be involved at all.

About the Study: The study, conducted by Martha E. Ewing and Vern Seefeldt of the Youth Sports Institute of Michigan State University, was sponsored by the Athletic Footwear Association (AFA), which includes more than 90 manufacturers of athletic footwear. More detailed findings on each of the sections are available in the form of a media kit containing three news releases, a pamphlet on understanding movitations, and several detailed charts. The kit may be obtained by sending $10 to: Athletic Footwear Association, 200 Castlewood Drive, North Palm Beach, Florida 33408.

Meeting Young Adolescents' Needs

This information is reprinted with permission from *Making the Middle Grades Work*, Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 1988.

Young adolescents undergo rapid physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development—in fact, their rate of growth and development is unmatched in any other phase of life except infancy. In the early 1980s, Gayle Dorman and Joan Lipsitz, then at the Center for Early Adolescence, described the major aspects of adolescents' development in the *Middle Grades Assessment Program*. These findings included

- early adolescence is marked by accelerated physical development as well as the emergence of secondary sex characteristics. The timing of individual development varies considerably.
- adolescents develop the ability to think and reason about abstract ideas and hypothetical situations. Adolescents of the same age can be at different states of intellectual development. Even the same individual may be able to think abstractly in some areas yet be restricted to concrete thought in others.
- although adolescence is a period marked by profound social and emotional changes, the notion that it is a tumultuous experience for most young people is not supported by research. On the other hand, adolescents who experience significant turmoil may not recover.

Young Adolescents' Attitudes

One of the most profound attitudinal changes during adolescence is the increasing importance of the peer group. As children, peers are valued as playmates, rather than for strong emotional ties. Adolescents learn to establish and maintain close relationships with people their own age. Within peer groups, young adolescents begin to experiment with new roles of "young adult" and "man" and "woman" in an effort to establish and identify appropriate behavior.

Although peer groups begin to play a more important role in youths' development, adult influence remains powerful. Most adolescents also report close and affectionate relationships with their parents. When conflicts with parents and other important adults arise, they are generally related to adolescents' quest for greater autonomy. When families fail to adjust to adolescents' needs for increased independence and greater participation in family decision making, conflict may result.

Young adolescents are striving to define who they are. Their search for identity is influenced by changing relationships with peers and adults and by internal emotional changes, some of them caused by puberty. The ungainly appearance typical of puberty exacerbates the emotional stress of young adolescents, who are already extremely self-conscious. Mood and behavior swings are common, often accentuated by young adolescents' diminished self-esteem—a negative view of themselves that they think others share.

Young adolescents also tend to be egocentric, preoccupied with themselves—their appearance, thoughts, feelings—to the exclusion of others' concerns. They tend to imagine the existence of an omnipresent audience as obsessed with their appearance and behavior as they are. A logical consequence of this self-consciousness and egocentrism is feelings of uniqueness and of invulnerability.

The Needs of Young Adolescents

According to Dorman and Lipsitz, if young adolescents are to develop in a healthy fashion, seven needs must be met. Summarized from the *Middle Grades Assessment Program*, they are

Diversity. Because young adolescents are developing new physical and intellectual abilities as well as undergoing personal and emotional changes, they need different kinds of opportunities for learning, for relationships with a variety of people, and for personal reflection and self-exploration. These opportunities will help them plan for a future career, establish a sense of identity, and learn appropriate social behavior.

Self-exploration and self-definition. Because adolescents are establishing a sense of who they are and what they can do, they need quiet time alone as well as time with peers and adults.

Meaningful participation in school and community. Young adolescents want to assume a place in the world around them; they want to take on new responsibilities, have a role in the rules that affect them, and help other people. Opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their families, schools, and communities can help them satisfy those needs.

Positive social interaction with both peers and adults. Because adolescents depend on peers for companionship and approval, and on parents and other adults for affection, values, and support in solving difficult problems, they need opportunities to interact with both groups.

Physical activity. Young adolescents go through bursts of high energy, alternating with periods of laziness. High energy levels may be related to hormonal activity and rapid physical development; fatigue may be related to hormones, excessive physical activity, or emotional stress.

Competence and achievement. As adolescents develop new physical, intellectual, and social abilities, they need opportunities to measure their progress. Success is especially important because many adolescents have low self-esteem. Competence must be rewarded; it helps raise self-esteem and promotes strong development.

Structure and clear limits. As adolescents begin to regulate their own behavior, they need to know what is expected of them. Clear limits help youngsters develop the internal standards that will serve as personal guides for behavior. Limits and structure also help prevent adolescents from harming themselves, ensure that some experiences are tailored for success, and let adolescents know that adults care about them.

Coaches' Leadership Style Can Affect Children's Self-Esteem

This article appeared in the October 1990, *Brain/Mind Bulletin* (P.O. Box 42211, Los Angeles, CA 90042) as "Coaches as teachers: Little Leaguers' self-esteem affected by leader's style" and is reprinted with permission.

As youngsters undertake competition, a supportive coach may be critical to their self-esteem. At the end of a season, young athletes in a recent study had higher self-esteem—in general and as athletes—when their coach was supportive, rather than punitive or merely instructive.

Researchers in Washington State also found that most of the 51 Little League baseball coaches were inaccurate in judging their own behavior.

Supportive coaches reinforce players by responding positively to a good play or good effort and encourage players after mistakes. Supportive coaches are also more likely to emphasize intrinsic motivation such as perfecting skills, rather than social motives such as impressing peers and pleasing parents.

More than 20 million six- to 18-year-old Americans participate in community sports programs. With the rise of single-parent families, the researchers noted, coaches play more vital roles in the lives of many children.

Frank Smoll and Ronald Smith reported these conclusions in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 18, pp. 1522-1551.

Appendix D

Coaches' Responsibilities

These guidelines are from the Racine, Wisconsin, Unified School District's 1990 *Racine Youth Sports Coaches' Manual* and are reprinted with permission.

Coaches must

1. teach and conduct good sportsmanship at all times.
2. make sure that all players participate in practices and games, giving all the best possible coaching and making sure each player feels important.
3. be willing to give ample time for practices each week and for league play.
4. be able to relate to players' parents the goals and philosophy of the program to gain their support for it.
5. be willing to put the program's objectives before their own personal goals.
6. know basic first aid practices and emergency procedures, reporting all injuries to the appropriate authority.
7. keep team rosters up-to-date and inform the league administrator of which team members no longer participate.
8. make sure all players understand the game rules.
9. remain at practice sessions and scheduled games until all team members are picked up by a parent or guardian or taken home by one of the coaches.
10. see to it that all players wear protective equipment.
11. foster and model the attitude that unsporting behavior will not be tolerated. They must maintain their composure and behavior during all scheduled games and practices. In addition, coaches have the right to advise unruly spectators to cease their action or demand they leave the playing area.
12. model responsible behaviors regarding alcohol or other drugs. Any coach who attends a practice session or scheduled game intoxicated will be expelled permanently from the league.

Coaches' Code of Ethics

This code is reprinted with permission of the author, Vern Seefeldt, director, Youth Sports Institute, Michigan State University.

1. I will treat each player, opposing coach, official, parent, and administrator with respect and dignity.

2. I will do my best to learn the fundamental skills, teaching and evaluation techniques, and strategies of my sport.

3. I will become thoroughly familiar with the rules of my sport.

4. I will become familiar with the objectives of the youth sports program with which I am affiliated. I will strive to achieve these objectives and communicate them to my players and their parents.

5. I will uphold the authority of officials who are assigned to the contests in which I coach, and I will assist them in every way to conduct fair and impartial competitive contests.

6. I will learn the strengths and weaknesses of my players so that I might place them in situations where they have a maximum opportunity to achieve success.

7. I will conduct my practices and games so that all players have an opportunity to improve their skill level through active participation.

8. I will communicate to my players and their parents the rights and responsibilities of individuals on our team.

9. I will cooperate with the administrator of our organization in the enforcement of rules and regulations, and I will report any irregularities that violate sound competitive practices.

10. I will protect the health and safety of my players by insisting that all of the activities under my control are conducted for their psychological and physiological welfare, rather than for the vicarious interests of adults.

Appendix F

The Fear of Failure

Reprinted with permission of the author, Joe Bournonville, from his column in the September 1990 issue of *Mid Sports*, the publication of the National Middle School Activities Association.

When asked exactly when he became a great hitter, "The Babe" responded, "When I was no longer afraid of striking out!"

The most important thing middle-level athletic activities teach, in my opinion, is not to win, but how to lose! At this age level it is most appropriate for kids to learn that it's O.K. not to win and to learn how to handle losing, to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, get back in the saddle, and try again!

With every loss, several concepts need to be taught.

1. Talent and abilities are not equal to all people.
2. The key to success is measured by persistence.
3. Many times it is factors beyond your control that determine the outcome of a contest. All their lives they will have to live with judgment calls; some may be right, and some not so right!

When the outcome of an event is not what they want, disappointment is understandable, devastation is not. They should learn to move on, work through the experience, and become a better, stronger person because of the experience.

Talk about alternate activities, and substance abuse, and "not leaning on drugs to help you through the tough times,"—what a better endorsement for age-appropriate activities. Intramurals give all kids the opportunity to work hard, to compete, and win or lose to learn from the experience.

What a wonderful sight it is to see a coach and his or her kids compete to win because they *can*, not because they have to! Kids are the reason for everything we do. It's my sincere hope that this is the *best year ever for you and your kids!*

Winning Ways with Young Athletes

Copyright 1989 by the Wisconsin Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse. All rights reserved. Additional copies of *Hey Coach! Winning Ways with Young Athletes* are available free in Wisconsin while supplies last from the Wisconsin Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 214 N. Hamilton Street, Madison, WI, 53703. Outside Wisconsin call for prices: (608) 256-3374. This publication is reprinted here with permission.

Help Wanted:

Male or female needed to work with active young clientele. Evening, weekend work required. Duties include teaching, organizing, motivating, giving first aid. Experience as role model, substitute parent, chauffeur a plus. Little or no pay.

Being a youth coach takes time and skill. And though the rewards aren't the kind that end up in your pocketbook, there are plenty of rewards. As a youth coach, you can watch your young athletes grow and develop, both personally and athletically, and know you played a major role.

Never underestimate your importance to the kids who play for you. Because sports are a high priority to them, you play a big part in their lives. You may be a bigger influence on them than their parents, especially if you coach adolescents!

Your athletes look up to you. What you say and think and do matters to them. You, as a youth coach, can help shape your players' self-images and can build their self-esteem. Your potential for positive impact on your athletes is great.

There can be a down side, though. Working with young athletes can have its trying moments. And because coaches are so important to players, negative treatment—like yelling, using sarcasm, and embarrassing them—can do lasting damage.

The techniques that follow were developed by youth sports experts to help you with the toughest part of coaching—the psychology of working with kids and getting what you want to teach across to them. By adapting these positive coaching skills to your own personal coaching style, you can increase the enjoyment and value of the sports experience for both your players and yourself.

The Positive Approach to Coaching Young Athletes

When working with young athletes, there are two different methods coaches can use to influence their players. The *positive approach* uses rewards and encouragement to reinforce behaviors the coach wants to see continue. The *negative approach* uses punishment and criticism to eliminate undesirable behaviors. Why should you, as a youth coach, use the positive approach?

- It works better with today's young athletes.
- It creates a more enjoyable climate for both players and coaches.
- It increases young athletes' natural enthusiasm for sports.
- It helps young athletes like themselves, their teammates, and their coaches better.

The positive approach to coaching youth sports has two parts—a philosophy of winning and an emphasis on encouragement and rewarding effort, not just performance. Punishment and criticism are avoided.

Though some very visible college and pro coaches rely on the negative approach, young athletes have not yet developed the self-confidence to cope with it. Used with young athletes, it actually lowers self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.

The positive approach does work, and you won't be making sacrifices in the win column to use it. Put it to work for you and for your players!

Winning and the Positive Approach

Much has been written about the many positive benefits of youth sports. One study analyzed over 400 children's sports articles, identifying 20 objectives of youth sports. Do you know what was missing? In over 400 articles there was not one reference to winning as an objective!

Of course, winning is an important goal, too. It wouldn't be honest or fun if your team didn't try to win. But there is a way of looking at winning that doesn't make losers of your players if the score doesn't end in their favor. With the positive approach, winning is kept in perspective. The philosophy—"athlete first, winning second"—has many positive outcomes. Most coaches believe this, but sometimes it's tough to practice.

Winning—A Healthy Philosophy to Teach Your Athletes

We all know Coach Vince Lombardi's famous quote, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Did you know that Lombardi was misquoted? According to his son, what he really said was, "Winning isn't everything, but striving to win is." It's part of the healthy philosophy toward winning that you can teach your players.

- Winning isn't everything. And it's not the only thing. Winning is important, but other objectives, like improved skills and better self-esteem, are more important.
- Losing is not the same thing as failure. Teach your players that losing a game does not reflect on their self-worth or mean a personal failure.
- Success isn't the same as winning. The score of the game decides only who wins and loses, not who succeeds and fails. Surprisingly, winning isn't important to maintain young athletes' interest in sports, but success is.

What, then, is success in youth sports? Success is achievement—mastering or improving a skill. Success is striving to win. Success is giving one's best effort. Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden emphasized this last philosophy saying, "the last thing I told my players, just prior to tip-off was, 'When the game is over, I want your head up—and that's for you to know that you did your best. No one could do more. You made that effort.'"

Athletes can control the amount of effort they give, but they have little control over the score. If you stress that players are not losers if they give their best effort, you reduce their fear of failure. They will try harder and risk error to learn, and within your players' limitations, winning will take care of itself. Honest! And kids who learn that success is achieving, trying to win, and giving one's best effort will be winners, regardless of the score.

Making the Most of the Good Plays

How often coaches reward desirable behaviors—it's the single most important difference between coaches athletes like and those they don't like. Use of rewards and encouragement to reinforce is the key to the positive approach. Used properly, reinforcement will help you strengthen the behaviors you want to develop in your players and increase their motivation.

Here are some guidelines for reacting to good plays, and other good behaviors you want to see increase.

Mistakes—Stepping Stones to Achievement

Athletes will make mistakes—they're part of learning the game. As their coach, how you react is important. Punishing for mistakes can lead to fear of failure and harm a player's future performance. Your reaction to mistakes can affect how they feel about themselves, sports, and you.

- Give encouragement immediately. Even if they don't show it, most players are embarrassed and need the support. If your player knows how to correct the mistake, encouragement is enough.

• Give corrective instruction if it's needed—in an encouraging, positive way. After a mistake, some athletes prefer immediate feedback, while others may need some time. Just be sure not to embarrass them further by pulling them from a game to correct the error.
• Experts recommend a three-part approach to giving corrective instruction. This approach will help your athletes want to do things right, rather than try to avoid failure and disapproval.

1. Find something the athlete did right and compliment him or her to reinforce that behavior. ("Way to hustle!")
2. Give a constructive suggestion, emphasizing not the error, but the good things that will happen if they follow the instructions. ("Next time follow the ball all the way to the glove. Soon you'll be catching them all.")
3. Offer encouragement. ("Stay with it! You'll improve even more if you work at it.")

• Don't be hostile or punitive when giving corrective instruction. The negative approach is more likely to lead to frustration and resentment than to improved performance.
• Don't punish for mistakes—young athletes haven't developed enough confidence yet. They respond better to the positive approach than to yelling or other types of disapproval. Punishment for mistakes can block learning, making your athletes afraid to try, and even your best athletes may start to play it safe.
• Words aren't the only way you communicate with your athletes. Eighty-five percent of communication is nonverbal. Though your words may be positive, be sure your body language and tone of voice aren't sending them a different message.

Coach John Wooden called mistakes "stepping stones to achievement." By teaching your athletes that mistakes are not to be feared, that they are a way to improve performance, your players will accept and learn from their mistakes. And they won't be afraid to try.

Coping with Misbehavior and Lack of Attention

How to prevent misbehavior is the puzzle most coaches want answered. You know that maintaining good discipline is important for a team, and that it's best to deal with it early in the season. But first, keep in mind two things:
• Your players are not mini-adults. Expect them to want to have fun and be active.
• Expect your athletes to test their limits, especially if you are coaching pre-adolescents or adolescents. It's a natural part of the maturation process. Even though they will test you, they really do want limits and structure.

Here are some ways to provide that structure without having to yell, threaten, or act like a drill sergeant.
• Establish clear expectations right away.
• Hold a team meeting to involve your players in deciding reasonable team rules and consequences for breaking them. Cooperation is more likely if your athletes helped form and publicly agreed to the rules. Discuss rules you think are important, and the reasons for them, but be willing to listen to their ideas as well.
• Try to balance structure with a bit of freedom. Remember your players are there to have fun.
• Reinforce and encourage desirable behaviors like teamwork, sportsmanship, cooperation, respect for officials, support for teammates, and "being in the game" while on the bench. Rewards can help build team spirit and unity, too.

What to do about team rule violations and refusal to cooperate.

If players consistently violate rules and refuse to cooperate, these suggestions will help.
• Give the player one warning.
• Give the athlete a chance to explain. There may be a good reason for the action.
• Be consistent and impartial—yes, even if you have to bench your star goalie!
• Stay cool and calm. Don't show anger or be punitive.
• Avoid lecturing or embarrassing the player. It isn't necessary or helpful.

- Stress that the player is paying a penalty because a team rule was broken, not because of you. This keeps the responsibility on the athlete, where it belongs.
- Once the disciplinary time is over, accept the player as part of the team again.

What types of penalties should be given for misbehaviors and rule violations.

Depriving the player of something he or she values is best. Some ideas are

- sitting off to the side—a time out or penalty box.
- losing playing time.
- losing a starting position.

Be sure to follow through, no matter who the player is!

Experts do not recommend running laps or doing push-ups or other physical exercise to punish athletes. It could teach them to dislike beneficial physical activities.

Note. Sometimes it's best to simply ignore behaviors, rather than reward or punish. At times, punishment gives athletes the attention they are seeking, and it will actually encourage the behavior. If you ignore the behavior, it usually disappears. This works best for your players who may be looking for attention by clowning around.

Discipline and Punishment — What's the Difference?

Though the positive approach discourages punishment, maintaining discipline is a must in youth sports. What's the difference between the two? Discipline techniques include

- setting limits on behavior
- making rules simple, few, and consistent
- being a role model for appropriate behavior
- ignoring annoying behaviors that do not cause real problems

With discipline, you help your athletes

- know what is expected
- control and change their own behavior
- become responsible for their own actions
- learn a lesson that will positively affect their future behavior
- increase feelings of self-worth and self-confidence

Punishment techniques include

- yelling
- lecturing
- sarcasm
- threats
- use of physical force

Use of punishment

- emphasizes athletes' failures
- leads to resentment and frustration
- destroys self-esteem and self-confidence
- does not teach athletes to become responsible for their own behavior

The positive approach, with its emphasis on discipline, will help you establish better control over your athletes and build in your athletes the character traits most adults want to see developed.

Creating a Positive Learning Atmosphere

Coaches are teachers, too. A positive learning atmosphere will help you develop your players' athletic skills, an all-important goal of young athletes. Your ability to help them improve their skills is a key to winning their respect.

- Recognize each player at least once during a practice or game. Usually the top athletes or the goof-offs get plenty of attention. Be sure the others do, too.

• When giving instructions, be sure you have their attention first. Then be clear, concise, and technically at their level. Telling a ten-year-old, "When the end blocks down, you fill," produces confusion, not results.
• When teaching a skill, first make sure they can see you. Then
—demonstrate the skill; tell them what to look for
—give a brief explanation
—have your players practice the skill
A complex skill may need to be broken down into parts to be taught.
• Be patient. Young athletes think more slowly than adults. Also, expect gradual skill improvement, with some leveling-off periods.
• Communicate with consistency. Telling your young athletes to be self-confident and then yelling at them, destroying their confidence in themselves, is confusing.
• Avoid using sarcasm with young athletes. You may not intend it to be harmful, but it is often misunderstood.
• During a game, wait for a break in play or a time-out to give coaching instructions. Otherwise, you may break their concentration and hurt their performance.
• Be a good listener—be open to your athletes.
• An athlete who has a bad game or practice needs support and encouragement. Be sure to give it before the player leaves.
• And last, remember to encourage effort and reward individual progress. Use the positive approach!

Your athletes will learn from you in another way, too. You are a role model for your players, who have very high regard for you. Set a good example for the behaviors you want to encourage. By showing respect for others, being positive and confident, and accepting your own mistakes, you will be teaching your young athletes to do the same.

Motivating your Athletes

As a coach, you have a major role in your players' motivation. Though motivation should come from within, learning why kids participate can help you maintain and enhance your players' natural enthusiasm for sports. Young people participate in sports for many reasons. According to the *Handbook for Youth Sports Coaches,* the top four are
• to have fun
• to improve and learn skills
• to be with friends
• to succeed or win
With this in mind, how can you enhance your players' motivation?
• Know your players as individuals, and why they are playing. This could give you the key to what will work with them, or why they are having problems.
• Teach them that success and winning are not the same. Success is improving and mastering skills, striving to win, and trying to do one's best. If you encourage and reward effort, you can help your athletes experience success, regardless of ability.
• Make practices fun by involving all your players as much as possible, with a lot of active time. Use short, snappy, varied drills. This will cut down on misbehavior, too. Idle time gives them time to get into trouble.
• Tailor skills to ability levels. Activities should be challenging without being boring or too difficult.
• Give your athletes a chance to play in each game, and not only in the closing moments. In several studies, 90 percent of the children chose playing and losing over winning and warming the bench.
• Help them learn and improve their skills in the sport, a major goal of young athletes. Even if an athlete will never be a "star," and most won't, he or she will feel pride in improving.

- Help them set realistic individual performance goals. Athletes with personal goals will work harder and longer. Find out from your players what they want to work on. You will find short-term goals most effective. Be sure to give feedback and when they meet goals, reward them.
- Use the positive approach to coaching! This is the single most important influence on young athletes' motivation.

Fear of Failure

You will be working with two different kinds of athletes who are motivated in two different ways. Achievement-oriented athletes want to succeed; they peak under pressure. Failure-oriented athletes worry that they won't perform well. They dread critical situations and the possible disapproval of their coach, parents, and teammates. They fear failure and are motivated to avoid it.

Athletes who fear failure may try to protect their self-worth by putting forth only token effort. This way they think others won't find out about their "lack of ability." This can frustrate you, and coaches often mistake this lack of effort as lack of motivation. Fear of failure can be the major obstacle to athletes' success in sports. It can

- hurt performance.
- ruin fun.
- keep them from trying.

How can you reduce fear of failure in your players?

- Set realistic personal goals. This is important, and your players will need your help to set and achieve them.
- Encourage and reward effort and individual skill improvement.
- Eliminate pep talks that overemphasize winning instead of *striving* to win. You don't want your players to link their self-worth with winning and losing.
- Be a good role model. Accept and admit your own mistakes.
- Again, use the positive approach. It creates positive motivation, not fear of failure.

To Keep in Mind

Some situations and experiences with young athletes can prove frustrating for coaches. The following examples from youth coaching books may help you better understand why these situations occur and reduce your frustration level.

"She did it so well in practice. How could she blow it in the game?" The stress of the game situation may cause even your top athletes to regress to an earlier skill level. This can be frustrating when you've seen them do it well in practice. A lot of practice on the skill, until it becomes habit, will help.

"Why does he even bother to come out for sports? He doesn't seem to care whether he's here or not." These players may have both a low motivation to achieve and a low fear of failure. In other words, they don't care if they succeed and they aren't worried about failing either. The best way to handle this type of athlete is to ignore behaviors, unless they are disruptive or violate a rule.

"Trying to get these kids to learn these plays is like beating my head against a brick wall. They don't seem to understand what they're supposed to be doing at all." Right! Young children do have trouble learning complex plays that require a lot of teamwork. Since understanding the plays is difficult for them, rote memory is the key.

"It's hard to believe these kids are all 12—they're so different." Children have many differences that affect their ability to learn and to play sports. Different learning rates, physical and psychological maturation levels, past experiences, family pressures, and

interest all play a part. Knowing your players as individuals will help you learn the best way to work with each of them.

Coaching Your Own Child

Sixty percent of you coach your own child, which is not always the easiest task. Parent-coaches usually handle their own children in one of two ways. Sometimes they are easier on their own children, giving them more privileges than teammates. But all too frequently, coaches expect more and demand more of their own children, who become resentful and stressed out.

If you are coaching your own child, have someone observe you as you work with the team, to give you feedback on how fairly you are treating your child. It isn't always easy to receive this type of feedback, but it can be helpful, because research shows most coaches aren't very aware of their own coaching behaviors. In fact, in these studies, players saw their coaches more accurately than the coaches saw themselves. While you're at it, have your observer check out how often you encourage and reward the rest of your team, too.

A Note about Parents

Parents play a big part in their children's sports experience. Many have genuine concern and interest, but it's no secret that some parents put too much pressure on their children, behave inappropriately at games, and in general cause headaches for coaches.

What can you, as a coach, do about these "problem" parents? Before the season begins, share your philosophy and program goals with them. Describe the positive approach, why it works, and how it helps young athletes. Ask them to help reinforce and support what you are trying to do with your team. You can do this by holding a brief meeting for parents. Though you won't be totally successful in getting through to everyone, some understanding of the sports psychology of young athletes will be helpful to parents in dealing with their own children in sports.

Second, model the appropriate behavior for parents. When you show respect for officials, encourage athletes instead of yelling at them for mistakes, and stress skill improvement, maximum effort, and striving to win, you will teach others to do the same.

The "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes" was developed in 1979 by youth sports experts. Keeping these rights in mind will help you to maximize the benefits of youth sports for your players.

Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

Right to participate in sports
Right to participate at a level commensurate with each child's maturity and ability
Right to have qualified adult leadership
Right to play as a child and not as an adult
Right of children to share in the leadership and decision making of their sport participation
Right to participate in safe and healthy environments
Right to proper preparation for participation in sports
Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success
Right to be treated with dignity
Right to have fun in sports

"Hey, Coach!"

"Hey, Coach!" When you hear these words on the street and turn around, you may see a player you coached years ago. Your players will not only remember you as "Coach" for years, they will also benefit for years from what you taught them. As a youth coach, you do much

more than teach your athletes to make a left-handed lay-up or to field a line drive. You have great influence over their personal development. The self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, persistence, and other qualities you help them develop through their sports participation are strengths they take with them into the future. By using the positive approach to coaching, and by teaching them that success is striving to win, putting out maximum effort, and improving skills, you are making them winners today—and tomorrow.

Reinforcement

- Coaches have "reward power"—use reinforcement liberally. Look for good things and reward them. You will see them increase. Mention the behavior when you reward as an instructional reminder. ("Good job, Chris. Nice level swing.")
- Psychological rewards are effective reinforcers. A coach can reward a player with a verbal response, or with a physical response like a pat on the back, a smile, or a thumbs-up sign.
- Have realistic expectations geared to individual abilities and be consistent in reinforcing achievement. When learning new skills, reinforce each time. Reward closer and closer approximations of the new skill. Once a skill is learned, rewarding once in a while is most effective.
- Reinforce right away—it's more effective. But later is better than not at all.
- Don't reward athletes if they really haven't earned it. They'll know when your praise isn't sincere.
- Reinforce and encourage effort as much as results. Whether the play is made or not, if you reward athletes when they try hard, you are encouraging maximum effort.
- Do you want to see teamwork, cooperation, and sportsmanship increase? Rewards and reinforcement encourage these behaviors, too.

Let your players know you appreciate them! The positive things you say and do stay with them and help their self-esteem.

Interscholastic Athletics and Middle-Level Education

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The appropriateness of interscholastic athletics versus intramural sports in American junior highs was debated sharply during the 1950s when junior highs sought to become more responsive to the unique and different educational needs of junior-high youngsters. In the 1960s the debate became even more lively with the advent of the middle school.

Many early middle-school exponents accepted intramurals only, and the case for both positions became polarized. Since 1970, however, the focus of middle-level improvement efforts has again turned toward issues more basic to the improvement of education for youth. Hostilities have recently ended between extremists as a genuine middle-level educational movement is drawing increasingly sharper focus on the uniqueness of middle educational needs. Attention is being given to identifying how generic middle-level education can become more effectively responsive to the needs of middle-level youngsters. As middle-level schools attempt to get to the serious business of program and instructional improvement, it is time to define what data suggest for the role of competition in all aspects of middle-level learning.

Futurists present data indicating that managing the resources of the planet in the twenty-first century will require a collaborative thrust far beyond that which nationalistic competitiveness has provided in this century. This does not mean that life will not be competitive, but that the appropriateness of competition and the consideration of effective competition should be concerns that educators address in planning school programs. Youngsters who begin kindergarten in 1982 will exit 12th grade in 1995. It is important that schools consider developing realistic and effective competitive attitudes and skills as part of school objectives.

To this end it is important that middle-grade educators consider more carefully than ever before the evolving characteristics and capacities of middle-level youngsters as developing humans and learners. Too often in the past, various programs that have had merit and true success in the high school have been introduced literally "lock, stock, and barrel" at the middle level with less effective results. Invariably, however, we have assumed that the fault was with the middle-level youngsters rather than with the programs.

In measuring the success of competitive goals and activities in middle level schools, we tend to look only at those cases where early maturing students could and did achieve and "measure up" to our overexpectations. However, many of these early competitive "stars" fall by the wayside in the high school. We see all too many cases of youngsters with competitive interest in the middle-level school who are overchallenged. Frequently, such students retreat to a level of spectator and nonparticipant and become adolescents and adults who shy away from competition and pressure.

If a current goal for education is to maximize competitive effectiveness for each individual, it must be remembered that not all middle-level learners can be expected to have a common readiness for competitive programs. One cannot forget the opening line of the ABC television network's celebrated "Wide World of Sports." The goal in middle-level education is to enable all youngsters to be able to handle "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat" in every aspect of life. This seems particularly important as we consider the issue of interscholastic athletics in the middle grades.

While individual schools and districts have addressed this issue, many continue to borrow in largely wholesale fashion from high school programs and professional sport and community leagues for young athletes. Five areas of concern demand consideration.

Emphasis in middle-grade athletics needs to be distinct and separate from that of the high school and from other athletic interests.

The range of physical, social, and emotional maturity of middle-level youngsters cannot be taken too seriously. Both the four-foot, seven-inch 13-year-old and the six-foot, three-inch youngster of the same age may be emotionally immature. Others of the same sizes and age may have precocious emotional stability and a capacity for pressure situations. Decisions about the range of offerings in middle-level athletics must take this fact into consideration.

Broad, intramural opportunities for middle-grade students in competitive sports.

In the past decade there has been increasing support for good intramural programs as a baseline for all middle-level athletic programs. Learning to compete in a more restricted, nonthreatening environment allows for the development of general competitive initiative as well as the learning of sport fundamentals. The latter is found to occur when health, physical education, and recreation professionals (HPER) on the middle level school staff are involved and committed to the intramural program. Where intramural programs have fared poorly, they have too frequently been organized without involvement of the HPER staff.

Interscholastic competition for the talented elite in the middle grades.

This is a viable component of the total middle-level HPER program. However, sports medicine professionals can provide overwhelming data indicating that implementing the high school athletic program at the middle level is irresponsible and dangerous, at best.

Richard Redfearn, director of public health for Lenawee County, Michigan, has written convincingly about the dangers of middle-level interscholastic athletics. In addition to the problems of cost for such massive efforts, he states that many children do not have sufficient muscle mass and joint stability to withstand angulated stress until well after their junior high/middle school years. It is to be hoped that the public will base its community athletic decisions upon such injury data.

For example, one National Football League All-Pro running back, who is also a trained middle-level special education teacher, feels that no youngster should play tackle football before approximately age 15. He states that both Little League and middle-level football equipment is modeled after the professional and college models. The player at those levels has a mature body with calcified bone structure. Many middle-level youngsters with nonmature cartilage bone conditions can actually be injured by such pro-model equipment. Until equipment is conceived and designed that protects the growing skeletal-muscular structure of middle-level youngsters, this professional star cannot endorse tackle football.

The success of interscholastic competition for the talented middle-level learners can be seen in programs in many districts. Selectivity is the key characteristic of these effective programs. The students in these programs have the necessary physical, social, and emotional maturity as well as interest in such participation. In most cases these activities are not miniatures of the high school competition. The pressure of bands, cheerleaders, and adult spectators who boo and demean is avoided. Rules are appropriate for a "nonspectacle" setting. Learning to compete, succeed, and lose; improving skills; and setting goals are realistically approached. Schedules are not excessive and the best of coaching and officiating are provided.

Instructional concerns in the total athletic program.

Effective teaching and learning about sports skills will undergird the satisfaction and enthusiasm found by middle-level participants. Performance, self-expression, and satisfac-

tion should be goals of both intramural and select interscholastic programs. A good instructional focus in intramurals will help to overcome many developmental problems common to the middle-level years. It is also important that student expectations in the middle-level years be realistic. For students who are ready for selective interscholastic competition, the refinement of fundamental skills and their execution will enhance satisfaction in competition. Overall enjoyment of such experience will be increased and provide a basis for carryover to high school and later life.

Role of athletics in terms of the developmental needs of middle-grade youngsters. The physical transformation experienced by most students during the middle-level years is critical in and of itself and for the effect it has on the social, emotional, and intellectual development of the youngsters. Athletics can be a significant means for self-actualization in terms of developing personal confidence, gaining group and peer approval, and experiencing success and growth of proficiency in some kind of competition. To ensure the latter, it is absolutely necessary that different levels of challenge and difficulty be present in the program to accommodate the wide range of developmental profiles. This means that both team and individual athletic options must be considered in planning responsible middle-level athletic programs.

Some Recurring Data

We freely accept that buildings must be built from the foundation up. However, too often in educational planning we seek to work from the top downward. I know of no situation where a successful, balanced program has come from a school with a singular or heavy middle-grade interscholastic athletic program. Successful practice, in terms of the issues discussed to this point, has required the careful establishment of a broad-based intramural program with a select interscholastic program as a final development. The term "balance" does not mean to imply a split in program emphasis or offering between these two elements. The interscholastic program is select and for an elite population, whereas the intramural program is important for all middle-level students.

Schools seeking to offer this broad base must, in many instances, face cutting back a long-established, heavy interscholastic program. Community pride, the "alumni syndrome," and a range of other pressure groups may describe this as becoming "soft," lowering standards, and the like. These enthusiasts may quote the late Vince Lombardi, "winning is everything" (his actual words were, "The desire to win is everything"), and cite such other expressions as "middle-level teams are a necessary base for successful high school teams." Existing data can now deflate such myths.

However, the "farm system" myth is one that continues to stand. To that end, I have gathered some base-line data on the reality of the need to have a strong middle-level interscholastic athletic program as a base for a winning high school program. Personal experience attests to one interesting situation. During two years at the University of Georgia I saw the best high school football in my experience. Clarke County (Athens, Georgia) is the state's smallest county, yet Clarke County plays in AAAA competition, the most difficult in the state. A perennial subregional finalist in football, Clarke County has been state champion in two of the past 10 years. In 1979 Clarke County was ranked number two in the nation's high school and prep school football listing. In addition to being the state's smallest county, there are no interscholastic athletics in the middle schools of Clarke County. Yet, Coach Billy Henderson takes ninth graders and molds a perennial powerhouse team.

While a number of such isolated phenomena can be cited, what data exist to confirm such reality? The following data gathered on two occasions from school districts in six different states are offered. Any district can gather similar information from its own records or regionally through a cooperative effort.

School districts were asked to gather these data from students and from the student records of those who fell into two categories. One sample dealt with students in their senior year who had been varsity "starters" on high school varsity teams. Samples were gathered in both instances for separate populations of football and basketball players. This was done in 1978 and in 1981.

The data were gathered as follows: Participating schools were asked to identify students who had been starting members of the middle-level interscholastic varsity team in the sport in question. They then identified from that number (who had remained in the district through high school) those who made the senior high varsity. Senior students who were starters in their varsity, interscholastic sport were also identified. The school then identified from that population those students who were interscholastic players at the middle level; those who were starters; and those who did not play on middle-level interscholastic teams. These data were gathered from the schools in four different states. While the sample is not broad, the consistency of the findings is interesting.

Conclusions

The data from both studies indicate that the number of middle-level interscholastic football and basketball players who continue to succeed in their high school performance is amazingly low. Apparently the majority of superior high school level performers do not surface until after their middle-level years. One explanation may be that the majority of elite middle-level athletes were youngsters who were physically mature at an early age. They may peak and then be surpassed in high school by later-maturing adolescents.

Those who contend that a strong middle-level interscholastic athletic program is necessary for a successful high school program are not supported by these findings. Redfearn's (1981) admonition of "too much too soon" is supported by these finding. Parizkova's (1973) data on the limited number of youngsters who possess both joint stability and adequate muscle mass also seem confirmed here.

If the majority of star performers do not surface until high school, even the argument for teaching fundamentals to those middle-level stars seems lacking. If fundamentals are taught in intramurals as part of the instructional thrust of HPER, greater benefit to all should be derived.

A philosophy of middle-level athletics must stem from the reality that youngsters in this age group are becoming something different. They are in the most cataclysmic transformation of mind, body, and psyche that the human experiences. The data presented here and in the references clearly indicate that the physical and emotional rigors of interscholastic athletic competition on a broad scale at the middle level are far more harmful than beneficial.

Effective interscholastic athletic programs at the middle level must be selective in determining their appropriate, elite participants. Even then, competitive rules must be adjusted appropriately as recommended earlier. Winning and losing, and learning to cope with each, must be placed in a perspective relative to the less stable and evolving emotional maturity of middle-level youngsters. Further, these important lessons from sports can be approached for all through a broad-based, well-organized, and appropriately supervised intramural program. The interscholastic element must grow from such a broad-based program.

This article presents one data base to bring to this long-standing area of controversy. The normative nature of this topic makes it possible for any school district to gather its own data. That data base, with the literature on this subject, should provide a frame to address local concerns of educators, parents, community, and alumni.

If findings are similar to those presented here, intramural programs will deserve a markedly higher priority in terms of budget, time, facilities, and involvement of specialized personnel. In addition, local middle-level interscholastic athletic programs should take on

a refocused emphasis consistent with providing appropriate competition and experience for those youngsters really ready to benefit from such an activity.

If local data reflect a decline in the number of middle-level star performers who continue to succeed in high school competition, another concern must be considered. That deals with helping the middle-level interscholastic start to understand the importance of his present success and not to assume that this status will continue. Helping such youngsters to recognize that other of their peers may suddenly grow up and equal or surpass their present capacities is an important preparation for life.

Thus, as with every other component of middle-level education, the athletic program must not lose sight of the need to help students gain the most from their middle-level experience in preparing for the future. If we take adequate care of the problems of the "here and now" in middle-level schools, the future will take care of itself.

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Appendix I

Interscholastic Sports and the Early Adolescent

This article by C. Kenneth McEwin first appeared in the *Journal of Early Adolescence* 1:2, pp. 123-133, 1981, and appears here with permission.

Interscholastic sports have long been a traditional component of the American educational system. However, many educators, physicians, sports figures, youth leaders, and parents are expressing concern over the inappropriateness of varsity type sports programs for early adolescents. (Dannehl & Razor, 1971; Gazette & Hukill, 1976; McEwin, 1981; Staniford, 1976; Underwood, 1975) Others believe interscholastic sports offer many benefits and should be of high priority for ten- to 14-year-olds. (Jones, 1963; Moss, 1969) The controversy regarding interscholastic sports has existed for at least 30 years and shows no sign of abating.

As the middle-school movement has gained momentum in recent years, a reexamination of the nature of programs for early adolescents has emerged. This search for improved ways to educate early adolescents has raised serious questions concerning the proper place of competitive sports in the middle grades. This renewed scrutinization, combined with the factors of increased media attention and budget considerations, has given new life to the issue. (Jennes, 1980; Pascoe, 1978) At a time when numerous schools and school systems are evaluating the role of physical education and sports, it is essential to focus on the issue in some detail. Regardless of personal feelings about the controversy, all aspects of the issue should be carefully examined by those responsible for making decisions that so profoundly affect the welfare of early adolescents.

The Case for Interscholastic Sports

Proponents of interscholastic sports below the ninth grade believe many advantages are gained from participation in varsity-type sports activities. Among the most common claims are the following:

- One of the best ways to learn to meet problems and overcome obstacles in life is through competing with others on the athletic field.
- Competitive sports allow individuals to live up to their potential and become leaders.
- Sports are fun, offer opportunities to make friends, and offer additional play activities.
- Early training may lead to the awarding of a college scholarship.
- Sports stress physical fitness.
- Good sportsmanship is learned.
- Competitive sports will be played anyway; therefore, the school should sponsor and control the programs.
- Sports programs help prevent delinquency.
- Competitive sports programs build school spirit.
- Competitive sports pay their own way and sometimes help finance other sports activities. (Jones, 1963)

Although these advantages are often accepted as fact, many significant questions regarding their validity at the middle-school level have surfaced. Evidence of the detrimental effects that may occur when early adolescents engage in interscholastic sports has received much attention in recent years.

The Case Against Interscholastic Sports

Many individuals and professional organizations have criticized interscholastics at the middle and junior high school level. In 1952, a joint committee from the National Education Association, the National Council of State Consultants in Elementary Education, the

Department of Elementary School Principals, the Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, and the American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation issued a statement disapproving organized competition below the ninth grade. (American Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1952)

In 1954, the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators published a report stating that no junior high school should have a team that competes with school teams of other schools and that varsity-type sports for males and females should not be permitted. (Educational Policies Commission, 1954) James B. Conant was greatly concerned with the suitability of interscholastic sports at the junior high school level. After a comprehensive study, he stated, "Interscholastic athletics and marching bands are to be condemned in the junior high schools; there is no sound educational reason for them and too often they serve as public entertainment." (Conant, 1960, p. 83)

At the Twentieth World Congress of Sports Medicine, a symposium on "Sports and the Child" was conducted. The delegates of this congress issued a strong warning to parents, teachers, and coaches concerning the potential physical and psychological dangers of highly competitive sports for young children. (Twentieth World Congress of Sports Medicine, 1974). The National Committee on School Health stated, "Interschool athletic leagues should be confined to the senior high schools....Junior high boys should not compete in football." (Weinstein, 1960, p. 167)

A special committee of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation stated that, "Unless a school or community can provide exemplary supervision—medical and education—it should not undertake a program of competitive sports, especially collision sports, at the pre-adolescent level." (American Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1968, p. vii)

In spite of repeated warnings from educators, physicians, and others, participation in competitive athletics has continued to thrive. A 1977 national survey of middle schools revealed that about one-half of the schools had interscholastic sports programs. (Brooks, 1978) A more recent survey in 1980 by Thornburg and Clark revealed that 79.1 percent of the middle and junior high schools had interscholastic programs. While opposition to highly competitive sports programs at the middle-school level is reflected in the middle-school literature, 77.5 percent of the schools in this survey were middle schools, thus reflecting that there is a heavy involvement in interscholastic sports in middle schools. There is clearly a gap between theory and practice in middle schools when interscholastic sports programs are considered. It is now time to place personal preferences aside and carefully consider the implications of the warnings that competitive sports may be injurious to the mental and physical health of early adolescents.

The majority of those who oppose interscholastic sports are not resisting athletics as such, but would like to see sports opportunities for larger numbers of students. It is generally believed that a quality physical education program complemented by a well-designed intramural plan is desirable and should receive high priority. However, there is less agreement about the role of interscholastic sports should play in the middle grades. The following topics are among those most commonly addressed when the competitive sports issue is considered.

Injury Rates

It is reported that 17 million Americans are injured badly enough while playing sports each year to need a physician's care. This number includes one in every three individuals under the age of 15. Twelve million suffer permanent physical impairment on the playing fields before they reach age 18. This level of physical damage was not reached even by polio in the pre-vaccine days. (Gerber, 1975)

As the contact in contact sports increases, so does the likelihood of injury. High-injury sports include not only football but other sports such as wrestling and gymnastics. Gymnastics has a reported injury rate of one injury for every two participants. (Fenton, 1975) There is also evidence that the younger the participant, the more likely the chance of injury. One

insurance company analyzed 46,000 claims and found that those of junior high school age were five times as likely to be injured as 18-year-olds. Another company reported that seventh, eighth, and ninth grade football players accounted for over 50 percent of their total claims (Weinstein, 1960). This percentage seems very significant when one considers that the football team is made up of less than ten percent of the school population.

Dr. Lyle Micheli, director of the Division of Sports Medicine at Children's Hospital in Boston, reports that since 1968 physical injury in sports has surpassed congenital and infectious diseases as the leading cause of death and hospital admissions in children under 14. He further notes that these youths have special vulnerability to injury. Dr. Micheli states that "An increasing proportion of this trauma is caused by organized competitive sports for children." (Jennes, 1980, p. 54)

Typical of concerns expressed is the fear that children under the age of 13 are not mature enough for contact sports and risk permanent bone and joint damage. There is also concern that the punishment and fatigue of strenuous competition can throw a damaging overload on immature hearts, brains, and kidneys. (Krogman, 1955; Pucci, 1973)

Although there are relatively few national statistics on the extent of athletic injuries at the middle-school level, it is evident that serious problems exist. When Lowman polled 900 orthopedists regarding athletic activities of adolescents, he found that approximately 75 percent of the respondents agreed that athletic competition should be discouraged in a program for adolescent youngsters. The majority felt body-contact sports, especially football, should be ruled out. Most of those approving of interscholastic sports qualified their answers to the extent that would practically rule out athletics as practiced today. (Dellastatious & Cooper, 1970)

In spite of cautions issued by researchers, the medical profession, and other respected individuals and organizations, many charged with the responsibility for the education and welfare of early adolescents refuse to take a realistic look at the situation. Apparently they fear that opposing the popular entertainment of competitive sports will make them unpopular. Meanwhile, contact sports continue to take their heavy toll of injuries to the growing bodies of middle-grades youngsters.

There is considerable agreement that the children need vigorous activity for optimum growth and development. There is disagreement, however, that the values and benefits of competitive sports are great enough to outweigh the hazards of physical injury and emotional damage.

Emotional Damage

Early adolescents are not miniature adults or "little pros" and should not be treated as such. (Low, 1969) It is generally recognized that positive sports experiences can make a significant contribution to the quality of life for young people. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that sports are not automatically good for youths as once supposed. It is the quality of experiences that determines positive or negative results. (Orlick & Botterill, 1975) This age group is in a process of rapid physical, psychological, and social growth. Intense, high pressure competition may lead to strong emotional problems and affect social development. (Alley, 1961; Pascoe, 1978) The pressures associated with "making the team" or playing under the expectations of peers, parents, coaches, and others when emotional readiness is absent will frequently result in failure and may cause lasting emotional damage. (Gerard, Schwenter & Watters, 1978; Pucci, 1973)

Competitive sports play is often credited with the building of character in participants. Many believe, however, that interscholastic athletics have lost their perspective and do not contribute to the cultivation of the desirable character traits proclaimed by those advocating competitive sports. Pietrofesa and Rosen state that "Interscholastic sports, as they are played at the present time, do not afford any unusual opportunities for the growth and development of desirable character traits." (Pietrofesa & Rosen, 1969) Common practices associated with competitive sports events (such as championship games, charging gate receipts, encouraging spectators) add greatly to the emotional pressures that are placed on develop-

ing and often immature emerging adolescents. (Bucher, 1971) Many early adolescents are not yet emotionally equipped to face striking out in front of everyone or "losing the game."

The "cutting" process commonly associated with interscholastic teams enables only those who possess a particular physical capacity to survive. This process may inhibit growth in some areas of personality and character development. (Alley, 1974) This conclusion was reached by Ogilvie and Tutko (1971) after studying the personalities of some 15,000 athletes. Whether the elimination process utilized by interscholastic sports teams is calculated or unintentional, it makes early adolescents feel unworthy, unwanted, and unacceptable at a crucial time in their development. (Orlick, 1978) The effects of interscholastic athletics upon emotional development, personality, and character development of immature youth are difficult to determine. However, many believe permanent emotional injuries are caused by making competitive sports heroes and failures out of players before they can adequately handle the pressure that accompany these roles. (Fisk, 1977)

The Pressure To Win

Concern has been expressed about the importance of winning in competitive sports at the elementary, middle, and junior high school levels. Overemphasis on winning interferes with the school's physical education program for all children and existing sports programs are often designed to please parents and spectators. Clearly the real problem evolves from stressing the outcomes of contests above the benefits which should be derived by the players. (Beyer, 1970; Burke & Kleiber, 1978; Campbell, 1974; Kniker, 1974; Romano & Timmers, 1978; Squires, 1961; Thomas, 1978)

Large numbers of early adolescents cannot make the team because of insufficient size, skill, strength, or experience. Programs that emphasize high levels of competition tend to force adult standards of success on those who do make the team. According to a recent survey, however, 72 percent of the children polled said they would rather play regularly on a losing team than sit on the bench of a winning one. (Thomas, 1978) These results should be considered when the nature of sports programs is being established. It is time educators realize that all students should have a real chance for success. This objective can be accomplished through a strong physical education program that emphasizes life sports and a comprehensive intramural program.

The Burned Out Theory

Individuals intensely involved in athletic programs in their early years may tire of activities before they reach an age where their full potential can be realized. It is not uncommon for individuals as young as eight and nine years old to be "turned off" to sports. (Orlick & Butterill, 1975) Those exposed to rigid training at early ages may reach a saturation point that may lead to later hostility to acquired skills. (Burke & Kleiber, 1978; Schwertly, 1970) With national tournaments existing for children under the age of eight and several million participating in little league football, baseball, and nearly every other sport practiced in the United States, it seems essential to consider this issue carefully. Is it the goal of early adolescent physical education programs to perpetuate those practices?

Fan and Parent Behavior

The incidence of civil disorder among those who watch, participate in, and administer sports events has increased in recent years. Many accounts of detrimental parent and spectator behavior have been documented in the media. Potentially positive aspects of highly competitive programs are frequently questioned in view of the human conflict involved. It has become common sports play for people to abuse the human rights of others in achieving the two objectives usually associated with successful performance—winning and looking good. (Orlick, 1978; Rokosz, 1977)

Too often there seems to be little understanding or concern by the majority of parents when the health and welfare of their children are considered. Some parents push their children too hard, wanting to be proud at the expense of their offspring. Others strive for

social acceptance and attention through the accomplishments of their children and begin to push them to win college scholarships. (Michener, 1975)

Some administrators and coaches say they can keep a perspective and not allow competitive sports to get out of hand. However, it is common that educators who might vigorously oppose parental effort to establish curriculum in academic areas will allow community pressure to dictate the nature and scope of an athletic program. (Jones, 1963) It is time to determine which type of sports programs are of value and put forth efforts to gain the support and trust of parents and other members of the community.

Coach Behavior

The middle and junior high school has been described as a training ground for coaches. Coaches may accept positions in order to obtain more training, hoping to be promoted to the senior high coaching staff. The resulting preoccupation with winning may lead to decisions that are based on "looking good" and not on what is best for the individual players involved. Unfortunately, too many coaches are interested in using youngsters to build outstanding win-loss records for self-aggrandizement. (Alley, 1974) This situation leads to coach behavior that is anything but conducive to teaching sportsmanship and respect for others. A study conducted by a California state university found coaches screaming at kids in sports activities. One of the major conclusions of the study was that serious doubt exists that competitive sports build character. (Michener, 1975)

Coaching at the middle-grades level often leads to additional monetary supplements for teacher/coaches. This situation makes objectivity on the part of these coaches difficult when considering the benefits of interscholastics versus an intramural program. The potential loss of financial benefits may influence their lack of support of intramural programs. It would seem logical, however, that the financial commitment budgeted for interscholastic coaches be redirected to a program that would allow large numbers of students to benefit from the expertise of these coaches.

When physical education teachers are appointed as teacher/coaches, all too often the coaching aspect of the assignment receives highest priority. Unfortunately, few seem to care what the physical education teacher does, but everyone seems to know what the varsity team does. Since egos are on the line in all sports contests, these teacher/coaches are frequently more of a coach and less of a physical education teacher. Another result may be that physical education classes become carbon copies of the interscholastic program, leaving the already neglected physical education program to further deteriorate. (Wodder, 1972) There is no room in the middle grades for coaches who build their egos, ambitions, reputations, or bank balances by expounding the benefits of interscholastic sports while continuing to disregard what is best for the early adolescents of our nation. (Brown, 1968)

It has been noted that some senior high coaches apply pressure on middle/junior high school coaches to win. The middle school team may serve as a farm club for the senior high varsity team. (Romano and Timmers, 1978) There are complaints that some senior high coaches require middle-grades coaches to instruct their teams in plays identical to those used in the high school. (Howard 1969) Sports programs in middle and junior high schools must not exist as senior high school varsity training grounds.

Diminished Opportunities For All

Inadequate financial support of middle/junior high school teams leaves players with inferior equipment, inadequate physical examinations, poor in-game care, poor officials, poor fields, and inept coaching. The cost of coaches' salaries, upkeep of facilities, transportation, equipment, and officials is immense. This cost diverts needed funds from areas that could benefit larger numbers of students. (Nieman, Garner, & Mayer, 1968; Toepfer, 1973) Ricken states, "Aspects of varsity athletic programs like the selection process, budgetary expenditures, and the domination of the gymnasium and athletic facilities are examples of inequality of educational opportunity. In fact, the entire program could be considered antithetical to the goals of education." (1976, p. 111)

It is claimed that competitive sports programs support themselves by gate receipts. This may be true of selected senior high school programs, but the business of paid admissions does not usually meet the cost of athletic programs at the middle and junior high school levels. (Howard, 1969)

There is also concern over the degree of disruption caused by competitive sports and their related activities. Pep rallies, practice sessions, early dismissal for games, ticket selling, and other related activities cause too many disruptions in the school's primary function—that of providing a quality educational program for all. (Weinstein, 1960)

The large investment required to operate a competitive sports program frequently leads to what George (1977) has termed the "star system." This is a system in which the largest share of monetary and human resources are expended on a small percentage of the elite while the general school population suffers. The overlooked often included females who are not accorded a fair share of the resources. (Alley, 1974; "Girls and What They Want From Sports," 1975; Wodder, 1972)

The star system results when much of the coaching expertise, prime faculty time, media recognition, parental involvement, and other resources are channeled toward producing the best performers. This common practice is detrimental to those who need the most help—the average and weak performers.

Those who do "make the team" may enjoy a temporary and shallow popularity, often with a detrimental effect on other activities, particularly the academic program. The psychological impact upon those who try out and are cut from the team is not easily measured. However, this impact is thought to be substantial and deserves consideration. Special attention and rewards may also lead to problems with peers. In some instances "jocks" are made fun of and serious problems develop between them and the less accomplished. (Romano and Timmers, 1978)

The practice of spending disproportionate amounts of money and human resources on so few is at least questionable, at best ludicrous. The physical education program, and the intramural program that complements it, must not take second place to interscholastic programs. Guidelines are available for those who dare face reality and fight for the improvement of physical education and sports programs. Quality physical education is too important to be offered only to the early maturing few. (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1977 and A.S.C.D. Working Group on the Emergency Adolescent Learner, 1975; Gerard, et al, 1978; Martin, 1972; Mehl, 1978)

Conclusion

Resolution of this issue remains in the hands of the reader. For many years it has been realized that varsity-type competitive sports are not appropriate for children and early adolescents. The nature of the majority of the physical education and sports programs at the middle and junior high school levels reflects an alarming "lack of fit" between what is known about the characteristics and needs of these youths and actual practice.

Now, as in the past, the majority of persons making decisions about sports refuses to seriously consider the effects of interscholastic sports on ten- to 14-year-olds. If this reality were to be recognized and confronted, resulting changes would be major and require a battle with one of education's oldest culprits—tradition. Unfortunately numerous well-intentioned persons fail to recognize the significance and importance of matching the nature and intensity of athletic competition with human growth and developmental characteristics. They feel varsity sports are beneficial to all, regardless of age or grade level.

Those seeking changes will be viewed, at least initially, negatively by some segments of the educational world and by significant numbers of community members. Yet, when one considers the alternative to this action, grim realizations surface. Excuses offered for inaction include, "They are going to play anyway so we may as well organize and sponsor the programs." The claim that school sponsorship will decrease the possibility of injuries is not supported by accident surveys. Participants in interscholastic sports tend to have better equipment and facilities; however, it appears that other factors exert negative influences

that outweigh advantages gained. It is believed that the overemphasis on winning and other factors (such as urging of the coach, presence of fans) provide an emotional stimulus that drives players to greater exertion than would be the case in free-play situations. It is also noteworthy that, contrary to the beliefs of many, accidents can and will occur during competitive play at a rate somewhat *greater* than in noninterscholastic team play. (Fait, 1961)

Another common way to avoid the issue is to state that both a quality interscholastic program and a quality physical education program with intramurals can coexist. The true implementation of such programs is rare indeed. Even if financial and human resources are available, every team with the exception of the "A" team is relegated to "junior varsity" status. Numerous other reasons are given for not implementing quality programs.

Students are the ones who pay the price for the inaction of those in charge of their education and welfare. This writer hopes that the day will soon arrive when educators and others from related fields will design programs that will benefit *all* who attend our schools. Quality physical education and sports programs are long overdue. It is time these programs become a reality. The courageous must step forward and stand up for improved programs for this developmental age group. While it is easier to rationalize or ignore these issues, the price of avoidance is high with the health and welfare of millions of children and early adolescents at stake.

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Appendix J

The Middle-Grades Learner

Reprinted with permission from *Who They Are, How We Teach: Early Adolescents and their Teachers*, by C. Kenneth McEwin and Julia Thomason, Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1989.

Some of the most significant changes in life are experienced during early adolescence. Within a relatively short span, growth breakthroughs that establish the foundations upon which late adolescence and adulthood are structured take place. These years are at times difficult, as youths struggle to straddle the overlapping worlds of childhood and adolescence. The relative security of childhood is best known to them, yet they are drawn toward adolescence. They sometimes think and act as children, but to consider them so is a mistake. At other times they seem well on the way to maturity, but to consider them fullfledged adolescents is also a mistake. Early adolescents are experiencing major transitions—learning new roles, dealing with rapidly changing bodies, and experiencing many new expectations from almost all segments of their world. During this period 20 million ten- to 14-year-olds experience major changes in physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development that are unparalleled in life, with the possible exception of the early days of infancy.

Early Adolescence

By viewing human development as a continuous process, it is evident that no clearly demarcated events characterize entrance into and exit from early adolescence. In recent years, however, increased attention has been focused on this middle-years age group. Many names have been used to describe them (transescents, preadolescents, "in-between-agers," young adolescents, and so forth), and there is no universal agreement on what ages should be included. Typically, however, those from 10 or 11 to 14 or 15 years of age are considered to be early adolescents. It is widely recognized that overlap exists at both ends of these stated age ranges. However, the majority of these youths are found in grades five through eight.

Early adolescents have been largely neglected by researchers, educators, governmental agencies, youth-serving agencies and other important groups and individuals in the past. Fortunately, in recent years interest in the education and welfare of this age group has increased significantly. This interest has intensified for at least two major reasons. First is the recognition that there is a serious lack of specialized knowledge of this stage of development. A second major factor is a growing recognition of a widespread increase in problems being experienced by large numbers of early adolescents, for instance, increased pregnancy and suicide rates and tragic levels of illicit drug and alcohol use.

The necessity of focusing more attention and effort on assisting these young people as they bid farewell to childhood and begin the sometimes difficult journey to adulthood should be recognized by all those responsible for their education and welfare. As noted by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, "Young adolescents face significant turning points. For many youths ten to 15 years old, early adolescence offers opportunities to choose a path toward a productive and fulfilling life. For many others, it represents their last best chance to avoid a diminished future." Middle-level schools have a crucial role to play in assuring that all early adolescents have the opportunities they need and deserve to reach their full potential.

Statements regarding the unique developmental characteristics and needs of early adolescents tend to be quickly accepted. Few question the notion that these young people are experiencing dramatic and sometimes traumatic changes in physical, social/emotional, and intellectual growth. In the majority of middle-level schools, however, programs, practices, and curricula still fail to fully reflect the many implications of the knowledge base

on early adolescence. In other words, the facts seem to be agreed with, but not always intellectually accepted and acted upon. Although significant progress is being made in many middle-level schools, the traditional pattern simply does not reflect the kind of developmentally responsive schooling needed so desperately by early adolescents.

It is still common to hear negative comments about ten- to 15-year-olds. However, the community at large, and especially educators, can ill afford to continue to remain uninterested or even negative in their attitudes toward these young people. The myth that these years are necessarily characterized by a time of "storm and stress" feed these negative attitudes. However, many empirical investigators have found that for most early adolescents these years are not marked by undue amounts of stress and turmoil. Those who are more fully understanding and appreciative of this developmental age group think of them less in terms of agitation and trouble than in terms of excitement and discovery. It is during this time that "one begins to catch a glimpse of the emerging adult side by side with the child, when leadership begins to make itself visible, when the capacity for abstract thought develops, and when, perhaps for the first time, a parent or a teacher can hold a conversation with the young person that has the tone of adult-to-adult communication."

A major weapon in helping others develop more positive attitudes toward early adolescents is the provision of accurate knowledge about them. The remainder of this section briefly addresses some of the major characteristics of early adolescents. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive treatment of the topic, but rather is included to serve as a reminder for those knowledgeable about early adolescence and as an introduction for those who have not had the opportunity to study this fascinating stage of human development.

Physical Development

Early adolescence is characterized by periods of pronounced and accelerated growth. This period involves the most rapid physical growth that humans experience with the exception of fetal and neonatal growth. Growth patterns do, however, differ greatly in timing and degree with some moving through this time of change rather slowly while others seem to change overnight. The growth spurt usually begins at about age ten for girls and age 12 for boys. Females mature at the rate of about one to two years earlier than males; but the sequential order in which development occurs is relatively consistent within each sex.

The age of greatest variability in physical size and physiological development is approximately 13. This rapid growth not only begins at different times but often is disproportionate since certain parts of the body such as the extremities develop earlier and more rapidly. This developmental reality not only often leads to awkwardness and unattractive physical appearance, it can also lead to serious physical injuries in contact sports programs.

The age of developmental maturity has moved into the preteen years. The average age of the first menarche has declined an average of four months per decade for the past century. Recent evidence, however, indicates that this trend has leveled off in Western, industrialized countries. Regardless of future maturational trends, this phenomenon, when combined with other modern influences, has important implications for instruction and schooling.

The end results of this growth period differ greatly from person to person. Each individual establishes unique trademarks, idiosyncrasies, and peculiarities, while many commonalties, tendencies, and needs also evolve. It is the responsibility of educators to learn more about these differences and commonalties and to use this knowledge wisely. No other period brings about such potential for social, emotional, and intellectual changes and the positive and negative results that frequently accompany them.

Intellectual Development

The intellectual changes occurring during early adolescence are not as easily observed as the physical ones. However, adjusting to a new way of thinking is a difficult task for these youths. Mental changes, which often precede physical ones, greatly affect the ways early adolescents adjust to physical changes.

During early adolescence the vast majority of students are operating within Piaget's concrete and formal operational stages. The concrete stage is a very conceptual one where information is organized around categories that are generalizable from one instance to another. The formal stage is characterized by formal thought and utilizes the components of logic and reasoning in decision making. This process is the beginning of the type of thought that exists in many adults.

As early adolescents lose some of their dependence on what is perceived as reality, they begin to focus on what is possible—propositional thinking. Some focus on the "here-and-now" while others develop the ability to deal with more advanced concepts. Moving toward this formal stage of thought enables some students to deal more readily with the possible and the abstract. They may begin to be able to grasp concepts such as calculus and philosophy and appreciate simile and parody. Some time during the early adolescent years, most early adolescents will be able to go beyond what might be and develop a higher degree of intellectual curiosity.

It should be fully realized, however, that the cognitive maturation of early adolescents is highly variable among individuals. For example, Conrad Toepfer has reported that "The synthesis of available findings shows that no more than one percent of ten-year-olds; five percent of 11-year-olds; 12 percent of 12-year-olds; 14 percent of 13-year-olds; and 14 percent of 14-year-olds have the capacity to even initiate formal operations." Further, studies of the development of formal reasoning suggest that only approximately one-third of eighth-grade students can consistently demonstrate formal reasoning. This clearly emphasizes the importance of teachers giving careful consideration to the reasoning levels of students when planning instruction.

Early adolescents do begin to think with greater logic and consistency. Those who have reached the formal stage of thought are still novices, however, when compared to later stages of development. Most often, early adolescents do not think extensively about larger issues such as government, race, or religion. When they do think about these issues, they do so in terms of personal and immediate responses rather than abstract and general.

Many early adolescents are still limited in their reasoning to immediate or past experiences and have difficulty with problems having more than two simultaneous dimensions or relations. Others have negotiated the transition between the real and the impossible and are able to hypothesize contrary-to-fact possibilities. As in other areas of early adolescent development, wide diversity exists and should be carefully considered when planning learning experiences.

Clearly the majority of middle-level students are concrete learners. They learn by doing, trying out new ideas, and sharing these ideas with peers and adults. Most are basically egocentric and have difficulty reasoning from points of view or experiences outside of their own. A major focus of middle-level schools should be the provision of realistic learning expectations and experiences. When instruction is planned and implemented and is based on factual and complete understanding of the unique intellectual characteristics of these youngsters, many positive results emerge.

Social/Emotional Development

The comparative serenity of childhood is left behind during these years as emotions begin to play a key role in the life of early adolescents. They experience greater depth and breadth of emotions but the nature of these emotions more closely resembles those of childhood than those of late adolescence. Although these emotions are not always volatile, they can at times reach remarkable depths, for instance, jealousy, spite, envy. Emotions are more easily forgotten during this period, however, than in later in years. They are not as expensive personally as those found in late adolescence and adulthood.

It is not uncommon for these youths to lose themselves in anger, love, fear, and other emotions as they experiment with the emergence of more adultlike feelings. They also become more idealistic and are frustrated when their ideals do not materialize. Early

adolescents often criticize themselves and others unrealistically which may lead to feelings of uncertainty, anger, and frustration. Anger, though usually short lived, is common among this age group.

It is also during this stage that feelings about parents, teachers, peers, and others begin to undergo significant changes. Interpersonal relationships take on a new perspective as the peer group gains in importance and adults are looked at with a new perspective. This new perspective includes the recognition that even the most trusted and loved adults are not perfect and cannot always be depended on.

Learning to accept and be accepted by others is a vital task in early adolescence. Same-sex companionship is common during the tenth to twelfth year with opposite-sex companionship coming later in development. Friendships that were more tentative in earlier years take on more solidarity during the middle years.

Early adolescents are searching for self-identity amid confused sex-role models, a changing environment, and the impact of puberty. They experience not only exceptionally turbulent emotions, but a tremendous flexibility in self-concept. This flexibility of self-concept has numerous implications for teaching middle-level students.

Fear, which often manifests itself in early adolescence, may emerge in the form of worries. Questions these youths may be dealing with include: Am I normal? Does anyone like me? What if I fail in school? What if I don't make the team? Fears related to areas such as death and religion are also sources of uncertainty. The fear of being ostracized or ridiculed by peers is a powerful force and at times yields such influence that early adolescents may compromise their own personal convictions rather than go against the peer group.

Conscience becomes more apparent during the period of early adolescence. Intense feelings about fairness, honesty, and values characterize this period. Morality is based more on what has been absorbed from the culture of the age group than from thoughtful meditation or reflection. The conscience is more pragmatic than ideal and more egocentric than altruistic. A primary social goal during this period is to learn the skills that achieve recognition and esteem from peers.

Early adolescents are easy to teach in some ways because they believe in the power of authority, their thought process is more geared to assimilate than to analyze, and they have limited ability to disagree with ideas beyond their range of experience.

Although the scope of this paper does not allow for full discussion of social and emotional development, it should remain paramount in the minds of all educators that these youths are experiencing important changes that have many implications for curriculum and instruction. Every attempt should be made to help these youngsters move successfully from the dependency of childhood to the relative independence of late adolescence and adulthood.

Conclusion

Less is known about the development stage of early adolescence than about any other time in life. Relatively little is known about the changing interactions of these youths in relation to their families, schools, peers, or communities. Knowledge is increasing, however, and concentrated efforts should be made to learn more about the behavior of these youths and the root causes of that behavior.

Early adolescence is characterized by transition, but should not be viewed simply as a "transition." As noted by Lipsitz, "To see adolescence so exclusively as a transitional stage is to deny it the integrity we grant other stages of life. No large body of literature, for instance, refers to infancy or toddlerhood as transition." The label transitional, if literally defined, may serve as a barrier against concentrated attempts to enhance a more complete and accurate understanding of this important period.

Early adolescence is a period when stress and other difficult experiences occur for large numbers of youngsters. Without doubt, these youths are facing problems that a few years ago were faced primarily by older youths. Despite these and other difficulties, it should be

remembered that much joy is associated with the period of transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. It is a time filled with new and exciting events. It is also a time filled with many pleasures as physical growth offers many novel and intriguing experiences; as mental growth allows a more comprehensive view of the world; as social growth unveils the excitement of new peer relationships and new views of comradeship; and psychological growth allows the emergence of the recognition of self as a primary person, not just a reflection of the expectations of parents, teachers, and society.

Middle-Level Activities Programs: Helping Achieve Academic Success

Reprinted with permission from the December 1990 National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP) Bulletin, Reston, VA.

The overall instructional goal of any educational organization, but especially the middle-level school, is to develop an integrated program that will allow each student to maximize his or her intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, and social capacities.

This requires not only a sound educational program, but well-structured and well-thought-out activities that will complement and assist in achieving the goals of the total school.

The first ingredient of a good student-activities program is not, as is often thought, a strong athletic program, but rather a structure that serves as the coordinating link between academics and the entire student-activities program, including athletics.

The linchpin of a good student-activities program should be the student government. Student government should be set up to parallel our national model, to ensure that each student is represented. Students must feel that they have ownership in their school, and all students should have the opportunity—either directly or indirectly—to participate in the governing of their school. An effective student government sets the tone for student involvement and establishes the climate for all other cocurricular activities, creating the spirit and tone of the school.

It is essential that the athletic program in a middle-level school be based on the same philosophy that governs academics and nonathletic activities. The goals of the athletic program should be consistent with those stated earlier such as every student must be given the opportunity to realize his or her maximum potential.

A very strong case can be made that middle-level athletic programs should not involve interscholastic competition. I believe that an ideal middle-level athletic program should be based on a 100 percent participation intramural model. Unfortunately, in too many communities, adult athletic groups or high school coaches view middle-level programs as "feeder systems" for high school athletic teams. This philosophy should be resisted by all middle-level administrators.

What kinds of an athletic program will best complement the philosophy of a total middle-level program and support the academic and cocurricular needs of the school?

The following criteria are essential for an effective middle-level athletic program:

Total participation. By this we mean that there should be no cuts—everyone should play an equal amount—regardless of ability. Middle-level students are at so many developmental levels, both physical and mental, that no one can determine who will become the next "senior high star."

No emphasis on winning. Participants should be taught the value and fun of participation. Participation and having fun is the issue—not winning or losing.

Administrative and staff encouragement to participate. Parents and staff should encourage students to participate in all cocurricular activities. An increasing number of middle-level students come from either single-parent families or families where both parents work. No student should go home to an empty house for several hours at the end of a school day. Involvement in athletics or some other school activity is a far more desirable alternative, and may prevent other problems from arising.

Short athletic seasons that provide several choices. Ideally, a new menu of athletic activities should be offered each quarter so that students are provided with a wide variety of choices and options. The cocurricular program should provide something for every student.

No community "all-star" teams. In many schools, students who are early maturers are selected to participate in special teams that play ambitious schedules against teams from other areas. Everything we know about the growth and development of adolescents tells us this kind of activity is not in the best interest of the students. Most 12- to 15-year-olds are neither physically nor mentally equipped to handle this kind of program or competition.

No tournaments or post-season play. Participating in any kind of competition after the end of a season elevates the importance of competitive athletics to a point that is not conducive to the philosophy of the total school goals.

Organize athletic teams so that no one will dominate. Avoid "loading" teams to ensure victors. For example, football teams should be organized according to weight. Again—today's 80-pound weakling may be tomorrow's all-state tackle. Do nothing to discourage participation.

Train coaches in the middle-level philosophy. Because most of our coaches are products of highly competitive programs where the emphasis is on winning, it is imperative that coaches be provided with inservice training regarding the goals and objectives of the middle-level educational program. The school's philosophy must be clearly stated and communicated.

Recognition for all participants. Administrators, teachers, and parents should take every opportunity to encourage students to be involved beyond the classroom. Seek to create a climate of expectation for each student that says education is a simultaneous experience that requires their involvement both inside and outside the classroom.

Provide opportunities to participate in a range of activities. Many middle-level students possess special talents in a particular sport. The temptation can be strong to encourage the young athlete to devote all his or her energies to that one activity. This temptation should be resisted. Students at this age should be encouraged to participate in a wide variety of athletic experiences ranging from team to individual lifelong sports.

Conclusion

In this writer's opinion, a middle-level school that provides a good, broad-based athletic and cocurricular program based on these ten criteria will not only enjoy greater success academically, but will also experience fewer problems in student discipline and enjoy a wider range of parental support. Additionally, the school as a whole will achieve its goals to a greater degree than will the school that views athletics and cocurricular activities as separate entities from the academic program.

In the junior high school of 800 where this writer serves as principal, more than 80 percent of this student body is involved in afterschool activities. During the seasons when students are involved, discipline problems drop, attendance increases, academic achievement of participating students increases, and out-of-school problems decrease dramatically. One can only conclude that there is a positive link between academic achievement and involvement in activities beyond the school day. The key is that the athletic program and the cocurricular program must be all-inclusive and provide for a measure of success for every student.

If Winning Isn't Everything—How Can it Be the Only Thing?

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When Vince Lombardi—the celebrated coach of the Green Bay Packers and the Washington Redskins—died, books, stories, and quotations appeared attempting to define him and/or explain his success. A notable quotation, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," became a featured Lombardi commemorative.

Self-promoters, quick-fix artists, and caterers of instant success used the quotation as if it were a cult rite. Their faithful uttered choruses of "Aha" in locker rooms and board rooms as coaches and management trainers invoked the quote. Quality, success, and winning became synonymous with more points on a scoreboard or larger bottom lines, and the "Ahas" expressed the faithful's satisfaction of knowing that winning characterized or defined excellence.

By scoring more points do we exceed expectations? Do we define quality and excellence with a larger score?

The answer is yes and no, and it depends on our understanding of a quotation that is simple yet emotionally intricate and compelling. If winning isn't everything, it must be lacking something. What is that something it lacks? If winning simply represents finishing a contest as the victor then it lacks dimension, principle, and completion, and remains a divided activity. Winning falls flat when:

You Realize that You Can't Transfer from a Dead End.

One-dimensional programs based solely on vanquishing opponents on the gridiron or basketball court result in learning that is not transferable. The skills of youths are quickly exhausted, and spirit, speed, and strength are not enough to be a good parent, spouse, lawyer, teacher, doctor, technician, or whatever else one spends life becoming. Many cling desperately to the attributes of youth, failing to let go, failing to risk, and failing to choose to grow. Products of these programs are performed for cheers and are lost in a world of silence. These are people who can't see the picture beyond the frame.

Shallow Goals Shatter Dreams.

Each year thousands of high school athletes dream of being the next generation's superstars. Only one in 10,000 high school athletes who want a career in professional sports ever realize that aspiration, and those who make it average careers of four years. With fame slipping away, the dream collapsing, having forfeited their education, too many of our young athletes find their future held hostage.

A number of observers suggest that the problem begins early, with high school students dreaming more than studying and schools—blinded by community pressure—failing their educational responsibility to student-athletes. The consequence of this, according to one study, is that 25 percent of the nation's high school senior football and basketball players are functionally illiterate.

If the only object of academics is eligibility, then athletes learn to take easy courses from less challenging instructors. How confused a young student-athlete must be when on one hand he or she is exhorted to exceed all physical expectations and on the other hand, counseled to achieve the minimum. The worst part of all this is that shallow academic goals set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy that athletes are not, and need not be, students.

This belief spreads rapidly through a high school, and results in athletes failing as role models. Good students resent athletes if they receive favored treatment academically, and

these same good students resent the educational system even more for failing to be as enthusiastic and supportive of academics as it is of athletes.

A narrow or obsessive devotion to athletics leads to mistreatment or abuse of our youths. For most high school athletes there is no dream beyond their senior year. Without a challenging academic experience the roar of the crowd will end and no one will cheer while you work at a minimum-wage job.

Personality over Principle.

Some coach with slogans, while the exhortations of others make insulting assumptions that players are not willing to give their best effort. You can't cheer or admonish your way to success. Coaches and players must agree to govern themselves with a set of principles. If there is agreement, those who are marvelously gifted have a chance to become great athletes and the not-so-talented have the chance to become marvelous.

Great athletes and marvelous kids are dedicated, disciplined, goal oriented, hard working, confident, cooperative, mature, honorable, and balanced. Is this too much to expect of an adolescent? It is if the community and coaching staff are not committed and if the athletic program isn't predicted on a basic assumption: Our children are primarily clients of the educational system and secondary participants in sport.

As years pass, the roar of a crowd should be a pleasant memory, not a stinging memory of opportunity lost. If you have a sound athletic program based on a set of principles it will be stable, with the same fundamental process at work each day. Then, expecting youths to exceed limits of a system and make heroic accomplishments is illogical. We don't simply become winners because of the "Gipper."

Trinkets Become Reinforcers.

I vividly remember an incident that occurred while I was handing out plaques to young men who had won a state high school hockey tournament. When I approached one of the team stars he frowned and said, "Is this all I get?" I shook my head "No," which caught his attention. I said, "You have the satisfaction of knowing you are the best." He had a wonderful collegiate career, and while he never played professionally I am sure he knew he was the best later on when they placed a gold medal around his neck at Lake Placid.

We have known for nearly 50 years that intrinsic motivation is a more powerful force in promoting learning than extrinsic reward. Yet our educational system, especially the athletic program, relies heavily on extrinsic rewards—public recognition, trophies, prestige of ranking honors, and so forth. These rewards result in our young men and women being less successful in the classroom and more likely to identify with their athletic, rather than academic, role.

Athletics today are more demanding, competitive, and specialized than in the past. Many of our youths devote their talents and energy to athletics in search of satisfying experiences. With the promise of something positive in their life they will spend hours mastering a play book—a book that may be their only text.

Why? Not because of trophies, but because they want to fill the void with something meaningful. They are willing to risk revealing their ignorance for a last-minute shot and the hugs of adoring fans because they want confirmation that they are somebody.

People climb mountains, cross Antarctica, swim the English Channel, and run in the Boston Marathon—not for the trophies, but for a compelling internal motivator. Our children are no different, and the trophies may be more for us than for them. Somehow we have come to say it is better if we award a larger trophy and our high school is ranked number one.

Economic and Social Forces Compromise Academics.

The lure of large profits from national television exposure and post-season bowls or tournament appearances have increased the pressure to win. In recent years, at least five

major university presidents have resigned because winning became more important than scholarship, more important than standards and principles, and more important than people.

If institutions falter we cannot expect children to stand up to the pressure. Today's youths watch athletes earn more in one day, one hit, one completion, or one touchdown than their high school teachers earn in a year. They see their heroes making even more money selling shoes, deodorant, and an array of other products on television. It is no wonder our youths are in hot pursuit of wealth and fame.

Our minority youths, especially black athletes, bear the largest brunt of society's failed promise that sports will lift them from poverty to fame and riches. We, the parents, educators, media, and adults encourage this cruel illusion. Many of our high school athletes think that even if they don't make the pros they will at least obtain a part of the dream by receiving a college degree.

Richard Lapchick, director of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society, pointed out in recent congressional testimony that, "A study of 1,359 black athletes and 4,067 white athletes by the Educational Testing Service for the NCAA showed that for freshmen entering in 1977, only 31 percent graduated after six years, compared to 53 percent of the whites. Still worse are the figures for black basketball and football players—only 20 percent graduate."

Conclusion

John Thompson, Rollie Massimino, and Joe Paterno are but a few of the successful coaches at major universities with a higher percentage of graduates than wins. Why? Because they pay careful attention to recruiting individuals who are willing to work as hard at being a student as they are at being an athlete. They monitor each athlete's progress, cooperate with the academic faculty, instill academic pride, and demand more than the minimum. Some programs require that athletes agree to attend mandatory study halls and forego high-paying summer jobs for summer school.

Discipline is an integral part of these programs, and peer pressure centers more on being a good person than a superstar. Players become a part of an extended family that often includes individuals who have graduated. For Georgetown University, Villanova, and Penn State excellence is not only synonymous with winning but also with the players who produce the win. These schools and coaches understand that education is a no-out contract and the emphasis is on the whole person.

Winning is the only thing winners can do, or as the son of the late Vincent T. Lombardi says, "Winning is what people do when they are at their best." Trust, respect, personal worth, stretching, and balance are the enduring values winners develop, and they develop these values because of great coaches who are first and foremost great teachers.

I am not deluded into thinking that the tension between athletics and academics is something new. Today's problems have their origins in the early 1900s. Reports from the Carnegie Commission (1929), the National Education Association (1915), and the Football Rules Committee (1920) talk about the overemphasis on winning and about treating sport like business.

If we are going to continue a dialog about the proper adjustment between academics and athletics we will need to consider our culture, not just our schools. High school principals, superintendents, and boards that have had the temerity to stand up to boosters have found their careers in jeopardy. If winning is the only thing winners can do, and "winning is what people do when they are at their best," then winning isn't everything if our young people's dreams become nightmares.

Appendix M

Parents' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

The following Parents' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities was developed by the faculty senate at Pierson Junior High School in Kansas City, Kansas, and adopted by them and the PTA. Copies are sent to students and parents and included in the student handbook and faculty manual.

According to Principal Jim Haas, the bill provides a positive framework for parental inquiries about school operations, focuses attention on teaching and learning, sets a standard of excellence for faculty members, and encourages parents to take strong roles in their children's schooling.

Rights

Parents have the right to expect that their children will

- receive a full day of expert instruction every day and reasonably extra help as needed.
- be challenged and encouraged to achieve.
- be safe from harm.
- be treated equitably.
- be treated courteously.

Parents can expect

- regular, accurate reports of achievement and behavior.
- honest explanations of school practices and decisions.
- practical advice in helping their children make choices regarding their educational futures.
- that their thoughtful views be thoughtfully considered by school faculty members.
- that the denial of these rights be corrected by a school official.

Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for

- ensuring regular attendance.
- ensuring that students receive adequate nutrition, rest, and health care.
- supporting teachers' legitimate efforts to cause learning.
- providing adequate time and facilities for home study.
- encouraging their children to achieve.
- insisting that their children obey rules that are equitably enforced.
- guaranteeing that their children do no harm to others.
- helping their children develop self-discipline and responsibility as they mature.
- providing a secure and supportive home that does not distract from learning.

Athlete/Spectator Behavior Poster

Certificate of Hustle

This is to certify that

NAME OF STUDENT

has shown exceptional hustle, drive, and energy in the (name of school) athletic program.

Coach	Athletic Director	Principal	Date

Laws Prohibiting Discrimination

Discussion of any K-12 school program should include attention to laws prohibiting discrimination against pupils and requiring equal educational opportunity.

State Statutes

Wisconsin Statute 118.13 was passed by the Legislature in July 1985. Administrative rules (PI 9) went into effect November 1, 1987. The statute and its administrative rules **prohibit discrimination against K-12 pupils in the public schools on the basis of**

- sex
- race
- religion
- national origin (dominant language other than English)
- ancestry
- creed
- pregnancy
- marital or parental status
- sexual orientation
- physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability

The discrimination prohibition applies to

- curricular programs
- extracurricular programs
- pupil services
- recreational programs sponsored by the school board, on or off school property
- other programs or activities

Discrimination is defined as "any action, policy or practice, including bias, stereotyping, and pupil harassment, which is detrimental to a person or groups of persons and differentiates or distinguishes among persons, or which limits or denies a person or group of persons opportunities, privileges, roles or rewards based, in whole or in part, on" the protected categories listed above, "or which perpetuates the effect of past discrimination."

Bias means an inclination for or against a person or group of persons based in whole or in part, on the protected categories above, that inhibits impartial or objective judgment affecting pupils.

Stereotyping means "attributing behaviors, abilities, interests, values and roles to a person" based on the protected categories.

Harassment means behavior toward pupils based on the protected categories, "which substantially interferes with a pupil's school performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment."

Opportunity for participation in athletic programs or activities (PI 9.03(h)). Students must be provided with this opportunity. This section does not prohibit separate programs in interscholastic athletics for males and females, but the programs must be comparable in type, scope, and support. See *Pupil Nondiscrimination Guidelines for Athletics* (DPI Bulletin No. 91548) for definitions of these terms. In a 1989 addition to the statute, the Legislature attached a fine of not more than $1,000 that may be levied against "any public school official, employe or teacher who intentionally engages in conduct which

discriminates" against a pupil or "causes a person to be denied rights, benefits, or privileges," in violation of this statute and its rule.

Local school boards are to adopt and implement policies prohibiting discrimination and designate an employee of the school district to receive complaints through a procedure established for that purpose.

Federal Laws

Federal statutes provide for equal educational opportunity regardless of sex (Title IX); race, color, and national origin (Title VI); and handicap (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act). For example, Title IX states that "no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity." Title IX addresses admission to most educational institutions; access to and treatment in curricular and extracurricular programs and activities sponsored by education agencies (including schools) and institutions; treatment under regulations and policies governing student benefits, services, conduct, and dress; access to employment in education agencies and institutions; and terms, conditions, and benefits of such employment. Specifically, Title IX covers counseling and counseling materials; vocational education, physical education, and other curricular programs; athletic programs and other extracurricular programs; policies regarding the marital or parental status of students; student health services; honors and awards for students; student employment services; and differential course or graduation requirements for females or males.

Specific requirements for athletics under Title IX may be found in section 106.41.

For further information on these and other equity laws contact the Department of Public Instruction Equity and Multicultural Education Section, (608) 266-9609.